



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

3 3433 07604260 9

CAPTAIN SYLVIA



Digitized by Google

MARION AMES TAGGART

Taggart

Digitized by Google
N230

CAPTAIN SYLVIA

**OTHER BOOKS FOR GIRLS BY
MARION AMES TAGGART**

Issued by Doubleday, Page & Company

THE LITTLE GREY HOUSE

THE DAUGHTERS OF THE LITTLE GREY HOUSE

Issued by Other Publishers

THE WYNDHAM GIRLS

MISS LOCHINVAR

MISS LOCHINVAR'S RETURN

NUT-BROWN JOAN

DADDY'S DAUGHTERS

PUSSY CAT TOWN

THE NANCY BOOKS (Five volumes)

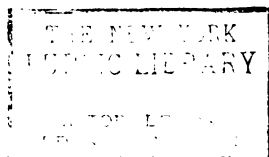
SIX GIRL SERIES (Seven volumes)

LOYAL BLUE AND ROYAL SCARLET

HER DAUGHTER JEAN

BETH'S WONDER WINTER

BETH'S OLD HOME





"Sylvia playing on the harmonica to her old friend, Gabriel Gaby"

not in P.S.
8/28/18
34

CAPTAIN SYLVIA

BY
MARION AMES TAGGART

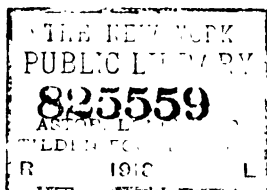
X✓



Illustrated by
Clara M. Burd

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
1918

NEW YORK
PUBLISHED BY
Digitized by Google



Copyright, 1918, by
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY

*All rights reserved, including that of
translation into foreign languages,
including the Scandinavian*

NOV 1918
3100
1000

TO
ELIZABETH E. CLARK, M.D.,
TO WHOM SYLVIA BELL OWES HER EXISTENCE,
THIS BOOK IS LOVINGLY RETURNED,
NOT GIVEN,
SINCE FROM HER IT WAS FIRST RECEIVED

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. "MISS BELL"	3
II. THE FORGETFUL BELL GIRL	21
III. SEEKING THE LOST	42
IV. A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY	60
V. "THE EX-HOUSE"	80
VI. TURN ABOUT	99
VII. "AND THEY CHEERILY PUT TO SEA"	118
VIII. PRUNES AND PRISMS	138
IX. "ONE MORNING, OH, SO EARLY"	158
X. STRANGERS WITHIN THE GATES	178
XI. SYLVIA POINTS THE WAY	195
XII. STORMY WATERS	214
XIII. THE SEINE	232
XIV. SYLVIA'S REWARD	253
XV. PROMOTION	271
XVI. "ALL OUR SWAINS COMMEND HER"	289
XVII. THE LADY OF THE HOUSE	310
XVIII. IN HARBOUR	330

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Sylvia playing on the harmonica to her old friend Gabriel Gaby	<i>Frontispiece</i>
(See page 12)	
	FACING PAGE
"Ruth Hapgood and her cousin Lloyd, wandering aimlessly along the dunes, watched a small cat- boat tacking home"	16
"'Never have I heard of a house being here! We've got to investigate it . . . It's a little house, so it won't take long'"	80
"Sylvia began to hoe energetically. Over against the fence . . . leaned a man, watching her from afar"	144

CAPTAIN SYLVIA

CHAPTER I

"MISS BELL"

The sunshine was so warm, the air so dry and invigorating that the waters of the bay curled up in the warmth, much as an ostrich feather curls when held over the fire. The wind was west, which is to say that it blew off-shore, a fine, crisp, ozone-filled breeze, light, but steady and refreshing.

Ruth Hapgood and her cousin Lloyd, wandering aimlessly along the dunes, watched a small catboat tacking home. She was making a long tack, her sail close hauled to the off-shore wind; she had been over to the other side of the bay, which was a salt inlet of the sea. She had gone across almost free of the wind, but she had to beat home, because the wind was westerly and her moorings were on the western shore of the bay. She was making good time, allowing for the manœuvres which she had to execute.

"Looks like a pretty decent boat," remarked Lloyd.

"Pretty, I think, awfully graceful lines,"

added Ruth. "I think the way the little waves curl up and break frothy around her bow, with the sunshine turning them into all the rainbow colours, is perfectly lovely."

"Say, what do you make out is on board her?" demanded Lloyd with sudden interest.

"Looks to me like a dog sitting up there by the mast, and I'll be blessed if I don't think it's a girl sailing her!"

Ruth squinted hard, shutting out as much of the strong light as she could exclude by lowering her lids to a mere crack to peer through.

"So bright I can hardly make it out," she muttered. "It is a dog, Lloyd! And—I don't know—I think it's a boy—No, it isn't! No, it's a girl sailing her! See, now she's coming about, you can see her better. It is a girl, and she looks young, about like us! Who in the world do you suppose she is? I haven't seen a girl here who looks like a sailor, a daring girl, like that. There's that Sally Meade that Aunt Helen asked to tea to meet us. She's more sporty than any other girl I've seen here, but she spoke of having a rowboat; she never said a word about a sailboat, and she would, if she had one. 'Course we haven't seen Mr. Clement Bell's daughter, but—"

"Yes, I should say but!" echoed the boy derisively. "Not much hope of her! If we hadn't just come from that house, Ruth, you might kind of hope for the best, but it's too fresh a nightmare to be fooled on. That house-keeper! Jiminy Christmas! Talk about starch and whalebone! 'No, Miss Sylvia is not at home.' 'No, I really cannot say when she will return. You may leave a message, if you wish.' Of all the Plymouth rocks!"

Ruth laughed at Lloyd's bitter mockery of the manner of the extremely severe person whom they had encountered a half hour before, when they had been to Mr. Clement Bell's house with an invitation for his daughter to come to tea at their aunt's home, where they were to spend the summer.

"Plymouth rocks, Lloyd!" Ruth cried. "Do you mean hens?"

"No, ma'am; I mean the Plymouth rock that the Pilgrims landed on, solid, pudding stone, all stone and warranted not to fade!" returned Lloyd. "What do you suppose a girl's like, brought up in that house? Do you suppose she sails a boat? 'Miss Sylvia,' too! She embroiders, she does, and plays the piano, and reads unnatural books, and—and—all that!"

What in the world did Aunt Helen want her to come to supper for! Say, Ruth, we'll have a great old summer here, from the present prospects!"

"Well, it does seem a pretty sober sort of place," Ruth admitted downheartedly.

"Of course I can stand it better than you can, but I haven't seen a girl I care about yet. Aunt Helen didn't tell us about Sylvia Bell. All she said was that we must take the invitation to her house, and not wait for her to come to see us, that we'd get acquainted that way. She said Sylvia Bell was hard to get to pay visits, that she was interested in her own affairs and didn't care for new experiments."

"Don't you see?" Lloyd triumphed over her. "Stiff! Doesn't think the rank and file good enough for her. Miss Sylvia Bell, done up in blueing and starch, gloss starch! Excuse me from that sort! Bad enough at fifty, but at fifteen—whew!"

"Well, but Aunt Helen didn't say what this girl's own affairs were," Ruth suggested an opening for hope. "Just look at that boat now; isn't she flying?"

The catboat was standing in much nearer shore on this tack. The foam was splashing

around her sharply slender bow; she leaned over till the water ran along her deck. Her white sail gleamed in the sunshine, the small pennant which she carried on the end of her gaff snapped and twisted till the girl and boy interested in it were forced to give up trying to make out the design of this private signal. The United States flag on the mast flowed out royally, its brilliant red, white and blue against the sky looking like a new hanging garden of Babylon.

Ruth and Lloyd could now see the young sailor at the helm quite distinctly. She wore a white duck middy suit, her hair was bound back tight and trim, a disreputable old slouch hat was pulled down over her head, completely enshadowing and concealing her face. She had the air of a person whose sole idea was on what she was doing, whose enjoyment of it was so keen that nothing else on earth awoke in her so much as a passing interest.

The dog on deck sat close to the mast, on the side of the boat now uppermost. He occasionally hitched himself up as he slipped down, and held his position by sitting tight, his fore feet closely pressed against his hind ones; he sat alertly, as one not intending to be swept

overboard. He seemed to be an Airedale, or an Irish terrier.

"Dandy little craft!" commented Lloyd, after he and Ruth had watched this combination for a while without speaking. "Wish I knew where she belonged and who that girl is!"

"We ought to be able to find out easily enough," said Ruth. "Aunt Helen will know. She's coming about again."

The boat made a short tack on the other quarter, then once more tacked and headed in-shore. The bay shores were full of bends, coves, all sorts of irregularities. The top of the cliff, upon which Ruth and Lloyd were walking, was from twenty to thirty feet above the beach. A long reach of dunes led from the village streets to the precipitous edge of the cliffs, below which lay the indented and curving beach of fine white sand, with its great rocks rising into suggestions of Gothic architecture, hollowed by the action of the caves which, in a north-easterly storm, gave out deep rumblings that sounded like the threatenings of Wotan.

The irregularities of the shore, both on the top of the cliff and on the beach, soon shut out from Ruth and Lloyd the sight of the little cat-boat which had so much interested them.

They walked on, talking listlessly, not caring to go home, because there was nothing to do there; not enjoying their walk, because there was nothing to do here.

In the mean time the girl-sailor had caught her mooring with practised skill, had made her boat fast to it, had lowered and furled her sail, all taut and shipshape, had untied the rowboat which she had left at the moorings when she went out, had jumped down into it and taken up her well-made spruce oars.

She shipped the oars into the rowlocks, backed her tender alongside the catboat and looked up inquiringly at her shipmate.

"Aren't you coming ashore with me, O'Malley? Or would you rather swim?" she asked.

The Irish terrier decidedly preferred coming ashore in the tender. He arose, came to the side of the boat and got ready to jump, the girl holding the boat steady with her oars backing water.

"Now, look before you leap!" she warned, and Charles O'Malley did so, calculating his jump so that he landed square amidship. He walked over the seats to the bow and took his place as a sort of figurehead.

The girl watched him admiringly. "One

might think you were going to throw the painter and pull the boat up the beach, the way you sit up forward, Mr. O'Malley. But never a bit of rope will you throw, nor help pull her up, nor make her fast. It's a hypocrite you are, Mr. O'Malley, and that's no lie for me!" she said.

The dog wagged his tail hard, without turning his head. The love between him and his mistress was only equalled by their mutual understanding. The terrier, whose full title was "Charles O'Malley, the Irish Dragoon, by Charles Lever," knew perfectly that he was to take as admiration anything that sounded like disparagement, that everything he did seemed good in his mistress' eyes, just as she was flawless to his warm brown ones.

The girl bent to her oars and rowed swiftly to shore. She rowed well, with long, sure, steady strokes, turning her small, compact wrists as she brought back each forward dip of her oars, "feathering" perfectly. She had pulled up her skirt at the knees, as a boy pulls up his trousers, so that it would not bind her; she bent her straight young back just enough to get the strength of her muscles, not enough to round it awkwardly, and she braced her feet well apart against the ribs of the tender's floor, showing

that she wore stout, heelless tan shoes, with protruding soles, of the sort that proclaims a girl fonder of her skill and comfort than of her feet's prettiness.

It was not a long pull to the beach; the young oarswoman made it in about six minutes. She ran her boat in with three final, deep, strong pulls which sent it well on to the sands, jumped out, pulled it up the rest of the way, and tied it to the stake that bore her number among the many such stakes driven in the sands for the boatmen of that neighbourhood.

O'Malley jumped out and began to whisk about, barking up into the girl's face and pushing her as she stooped to tie her boat with a genuine sailors' hitch.

"Oh, nonsense, O'Malley, you spalpeen!" she cried. "I've got other things to do besides play with you! And I'm pretty sure you'll howl at what I'm going to do; you won't enjoy it a little bit, Mr. O'Malley! But if you don't care about it, we can go home to Casabianca; *she'll* never play the harmonica at you, that's one sure thing!"

With which declaration the girl went up the beach, with O'Malley gambolling at her side.

She kept on till she espied a figure seated on

the end of a small pile of pine boards which had lain for a long time darkening in the salt air and sunshine, brought there for a bath-house which had never been built. The figure was that of a man past sixty years old, tanned and beaten by weather. He had a comical little drawn-up face and a comical little plump body. His eyes were so blue as to seem improbable; his entire expression was that of one who had a joke with himself which had been begun in his babyhood and had never yet been exhausted.

When the young girl saw him she waved both arms wildly and shouted:

"Hi-O, there, Mr. Gaby! Ship ahoy, Ga-briel Ga-by-y-y!"

The little round man looked up and grinned appreciatively.

"Hallo! Ship ahoy, Sylvie!" he returned.

Sylvia Bell, she of the dignified name and most undignified tastes, ran down the beach and slapped her friend on the shoulder as she came up with him.

"Got it!" she announced breathlessly.

"That so?" inquired Gabriel Gaby. "Want to know!"

"Great one," panted Sylvia, pulling out of her skirt pocket, from below her middie, a long and

narrow packet. She hastily tore off the wrapper and took from its box a particularly fine harmonica, which she displayed with pride.

"Now, sir, Mr. Gabriel Gaby, retired seaman and mouth organ soloist, keep your promise and give me my first lesson!"

"My gracious grandmother, Sylvie, 'tain't so much in teachin' as 'tis in what you may call gen'us, nat'ral gen'us an' gumption. Not but what I'm a-goin' to learn ye," he added hastily, seeing Sylvia about to protest; "I'll learn ye, 's far's learnin' goes. Now, I take out mine, see?"

He suited the action to the word by producing from his trouser pocket a battered harmonica, but a large one, out of which he carefully shook considerable loose tobacco.

"Put your mouth over it, this way; not down close, like most dumb idyets do when they begin, but so's t' blow kinder 'cross it. Then you finger over them holes, an' mostly find out for yourself how't goes. It's practise, that's what 'tis, mostly. Practise an' a kind o' fitness for it. I shipped first time as cook's help, an' I used t' practise nights long's the crew'd stand fer it. 'Twant long 'fore they'd beg me fer a tune. They'd dance to my mouth organ. I got so's't I could play a hornpipe on week days, an' hymn

tunes on Sundays, till you wouldn't believe how't would sound on the waste o' waters, so's t' speak. Now once when I was to—"

"Gabriel Gaby," interrupted Sylvia sternly, "will you please stop talking and blow? I want to see how you do it. You know I love your stories, but fair's fair; you promised to teach me to play, and I'm here for a lesson. Come on, now. Is it this way?"

There can be no more convincing proof of an old salt's love for a young creature than that he will allow her to stop his telling the tales of his glorious days at sea, and this test Gabriel Gaby now passed convincingly.

"Hold it this way, not that way," he said meekly, correcting the position of her fingers as he spoke, "an' blow what you might call discreetly, not too hard, not too easy, an' not in puffs, like a sou'-wester, but steady, like an east wind that brings ye in free o' the wind, in time for supper."

Sylvia began her experiments. She blew and fingered, at first frantically, and with no result to mention. But gradually the manner of doing came to her and she began to produce sounds that promised success. Her prophecy as to O'Malley proved true. He sat at a short dis-

tance from his mistress, howling forlornly. Whether it was from anxiety as to her symptoms, or merely due to a musical ear, no one could say, but howl O'Malley did, with but short intervals to make sure that it was to the full as bad as he had at first thought it.

Ruth and Lloyd Hapgood had descended the steps which led from the cliff at its lowest point, down to the beach. They walked along the sands and came up to the group on the end of the pile of boards, guided by the howls of O'Malley, and the extraordinary sounds which Sylvia Bell was producing.

"Hallo!" said Lloyd, stopping short as he saw the tableau.

Sylvia nodded, but did not remove her harmonica to speak. At that moment she was almost triumphing over the intricacies of Yankee Doodle.

She stopped her performance when she reached the last note, removed her instrument from her lips and wiped them boyishly with the back of her hand.

"Hallo!" she then said. "I'm getting my education in music. Mr. Gabriel Gaby is giving me organ lessons, *mouth* organ lessons."

"You're the girl that sailed the catboat that

came in a little while ago, and that's the dog!" cried Ruth.

"I know it," returned Sylvia. "So does O'Malley."

"Is that his name?" Lloyd said with a loud laugh.

"Partly. The full name is Charles O'Malley, the Irish Dragoon. His name is a novel, written by Charles Lever, so sometimes I add: 'By Charles Lever' to the rest of his title. Are you two staying near here? I never saw you before." Sylvia frowned as she spoke, trying to place the cousins.

"We're cousins, our names are—our last name is—Hapgood, Ruth and Lloyd," said Ruth. "We're spending the summer here, at our Aunt Helen's, she's our mother's sister; she's Mrs. Arthur Leverett."

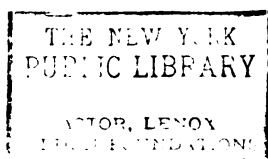
"Oh, yes; I heard about your coming," said Sylvia without enthusiasm, in fact she put the harmonica to her lips as if she longed to go on practising.

"You told your dog's name, not yours," suggested Ruth, with her coaxing smile. Ruth was a pretty little creature, with dainty ways and the habit of winning people.

"My name's Bell, not my first name, my last



"Ruth Hapgood and her cousin Lloyd, wandering aimlessly along the dunes, watched a small catboat tacking home"



name—Sylvia's my first name," said Sylvia ungraciously.

"My aunt!" exclaimed Lloyd, fairly taken off his feet by this announcement. Sylvia looked up quickly, as if she were prepared to resent the overwhelming surprise betrayed by the boy. Ruth interposed with frankness that was the perfection of tact.

"We just came from your house," she said. "Aunt Helen sent us to ask you to tea Thursday. We saw the housekeeper, or she said that's what she was, and she seemed—well, rather stern, you know. So we made up our minds you would be a regular formal young lady, not a bit a girl who could do what you can do. You don't mind?" Ruth prudently refrained from saying that the surprise of finding the "Miss Sylvia," whom they had pictured such a stiff, proper person, taking lessons on the harmonica, from an old sailor, seated on a pile of lumber on the beach, was too much for any one to face unmoved.

Sylvia looked up with a twinkle in eyes which Ruth and Lloyd discovered were very beautiful dark blue ones, shaded by long dark lashes.

"Poor things," she said, with a twist of her

•

humorous lips. "So you ran into Casabianca, did you? She's not easy to face, till you get used to her. She doesn't train me; I train myself."

"Is her name Casabianca?" cried Ruth.

"No, it isn't," said Sylvia. "It's really Cassandra, Cassandra Billings, but I call her Casabianca because she wouldn't budge from her post, not if ten decks were burning under her. Now, if you don't mind, I'm going on trying to get the hang of this box of holes. I'm going to learn to play it, if I have to work at it till I'm ninety."

"Will you come to tea at Aunt Helen's Thursday?" asked Ruth, blushing under this frank dismissal of her and Lloyd by the absorbed performer.

"Oh, teas are"—Sylvia caught herself up short. She did the only thing that could be done after a beginning which no one could have failed to conclude as she would have concluded it had not a tardy recollection of manners checked her. She laughed, and said:

"I don't like visiting much, do you? But please thank your aunt, and say I'll be there. I've such a lot of things to do, I don't go to any one's house, hardly."

"Well, good-bye," said Lloyd. "We'd better move on, Ruth, after this hint that harmonicas make better talk than we do! I don't mind your break. I guess you're a boyish sort of girl, and no boy likes dressing up and visiting. So long. Good luck to your tooting."

"Good-bye," added Ruth, following Lloyd, strongly attracted by this singular girl, yet half minded to be offended.

"Good-bye," said Sylvia absent-mindedly. "Mr. Gaby, do you use your little finger on this hole, or the fourth finger?"

"Makes no odds, 's long's you git the best sound you kin out o' it," said her instructor. "See here, Sylvie Bell, you're fifteen years old; when you goin' to begin to be a young lady an' behave like one? The idee of showin' you'd ruther blow this mouth orgin, here on these boards, than go out to visit at such a nice woman's as Mis' Leverett!"

"I'm going to act grown up in just about twenty years from now—if I can't get out of doing it then!" retorted Sylvia. "I've got you and O'Malley and my splendid, clever father—though he isn't very visible most of the time—and what do I want to know new boys and girls for? Though they looked nice enough. Come

on, Gabriel Gaby, darling, and teach me my music!"

She put her full red lips over her harmonica and resumed her labours in earnest. As Ruth and Lloyd went down the beach, talking hard of the girl who had snubbed them, but had profoundly interested them and strongly attracted them both, the spasmodic notes of her harmonica, and O'Malley's agonised howls of protest followed them, borne on the breeze, fainter and fainter, but still clear, till they reached the beginning of the street, up which they must turn to their Aunt Helen's house.

CHAPTER II

THE FORGETFUL BELL GIRL

Late that afternoon Sylvia came sauntering homeward, O'Malley at her heels. They marched to the accompaniment of what might develop into music, of a sort, but which, so far, had not come nearer it than a few notes indicating a tune somewhere in the player's intention, with many intrusions of sounds which were wholly beyond the limits of any known air.

O'Malley was able to bear the harmonica better now that he was on his feet, finding partial nervous vent in motion. He was a remarkably intelligent dog; it may be that he counted on rescue from Cassandra Billings when Sylvia should have reached home, toward which they were heading. Cassandra and O'Malley did not love each other, but it may be that O'Malley hoped for favourable results from her exceedingly probable dislike of the harmonica.

Sylvia's playing got wilder the nearer she came to the house; this was so because she tried harder to make it effective.

Cassandra Billings heard the banshee-like strains in "her lair," as Sylvia called the house-keeper's room. She dropped the heavy bed-spread which she was going over in a search for a stain which she had hoped would come out in the wash, and with the single remark: "Confound boys!" hastened down to cut off the culprit.

Mr. Clement Bell, Sylvia's father, had his quarters in a detached building some seventy feet from the house. No woman was ever allowed to penetrate its fastness; Mr. Bell kept a man for the services he required, such as cleaning up, errands, trifling assistance in his work, and the like, but Cassandra was forbidden the premises, and Sylvia hardly existed to her father's consciousness in her present form. He had realised her, to a degree, as a baby, because her mother had died then, and a motherless baby must more or less penetrate its father's mind. But he did not see her as a tall girl of fifteen; to him she was still a baby girl. Mr. Bell's work to Sylvia's mind was, vaguely, "something scientific"; she realised it as little as he realised her. But there was this difference: to the girl her father was a towering figure, reaching in all directions across her horizon,

an unknown, adorable demigod, to whom she secretly paid all the riches of her tremendous capacity for worship and loyalty.

Although Mr. Bell did not allow Cassandra to intrude within the small building which he had erected for his labours, it was that dragon-like personage's part to guard her employer's exceedingly irritable nerves from irritation. She made intrusion upon him impossible, she secured him quiet, she never resented his manifest contempt for women; she knew he tolerated her only because she was invaluable, and because he knew, in his cloudy way, that his little girl must have a woman to look after her and that his house must have a keeper. She accepted this attitude toward herself as a part of what the village called "his queerness," and what she herself regarded as his greatness.

Therefore when she heard an irreverent mouth organ, badly played, coming close to Mr. Bell's workshop, she came down, not "like a wolf on the fold," but like the shepherd on the wolf, to put a stop to it.

"For the land's sake, Miss Sylvia Bell!" exclaimed Cassandra stopping short, aghast when she saw who the culprit actually was. "Are *you* playin' a mouth organ?"

Sylvia removed her instrument and regarded Cassandra with well-feigned rapture.

"Cass, you darling!" she cried. "I didn't know whether any one would call it playing. I was sort of afraid, you see, that they—wouldn't! It sounds kind of jumpy to me, but I'm getting its jumps down, I honestly do believe."

"Did you march through the town doing that?" demanded Cassandra, ignoring, and too-well understanding Sylvia's way of taking her first implied protest.

"Like—who was that Highland piper in 'The Little Minister,' that got mad, and marched through the town and all the way back to the highlands, piping like everything, he was so ripping? I'm sorry, Cass, but I didn't. I came up along the dunes. It's nearer, of course, and then—I don't play *quite* well enough to be a procession, not yet. Do you know, Cass, O'Malley simply hates it?" Sylvia looked up at Cassandra from the foot of the steps with wide-open eyes, full of innocent surprise.

Cassandra grunted. "Even a dog would know no young lady should take to a mouth organ," she said severely. "What under the canopy 'm I goin' to *do* with you, Miss Sylvia? Here I won't even call you by your name, 's I've

a perfect right to do, havin' known you, and done for you since before you hardly had a name, let alone bein' able to say it yourself, just so's you'll be reminded you're Miss Bell proper, and look at you—mouth organin'!"

"But I'm not proper Miss Bell, Casabian—Cass dear," said Sylvia. "Do give me that much credit! The proper Miss Bell, and the Miss Bell proper, are different things. O'Malley didn't mind my playing because I was a young lady. O'Malley doesn't consider me a young lady. I think he hated the lovely sounds. I suppose he's afraid I'll die if I blow unearthly music."

Cassandra's lips twitched; she had a sense of humour somewhere beneath her lank, brown, severe exterior, and she was putty in Sylvia's hands, as that young person quite well knew.

"I can only say that I wish your father would take an interest in you, half the interest he does in whatever he's tryin', in that place no one ever sees of his!" said Cassandra, her meaning plain in spite of the peculiarities of her phrasing. "You worry me to death! I want you should live up to your duty. I'll be thankful when your aunt comes to buy your fall clothes. Maybe

she'll make you hear to her. I expect it ought to be a boardin' school."

"Ought it, Cass?" asked Sylvia. "I know heaps that girls of my age don't know, just heaps! And poor Aunt Emily always does make me hear her, but the trouble is, Cass dear, there isn't any echo." Sylvia's face lit up with a gleam of joy. "Say, Cass, I've found out something! Who knows; maybe I'll be a scientific man—worker, I mean, like my father! I've discovered something this minute! That was a deep saying. You do hear what people say, but it doesn't matter if you do, unless something in you echoes what you hear. When you echo the sermons preached at you, then they're really inside you, and you may, possibly, carry out the preacher's notion. Though usually it's a preacheress! I think that's a really great discovery. And yet, poor Cass, you think I'm growing up ignorant! When I'm really a—I wonder what it is that discovers that sort of things? A philosopher, I suppose; maybe it's a doctor, or an electrician—I don't know!"

"A tomboy, who'd rather sail a boat, and play with a dog, than be a nice, well-behaved young lady, that's what it is," said Cassandra, not in the least impressed by Sylvia's philosophy.

"Why don't you get off your play suit, and dress for tea? It wants only three quarters of an hour to tea time."

"Oh, Cassandra Billings, and yet you keep me here, explaining things to you, in such interesting conversation! Now, maybe, I'll be late, and you know I'm always prompt at meals!" cried Sylvia, and dashed into the house and up the stairs as if panic-stricken at the prospect.

Cassandra looked after her, her lips compressed to keep back a laugh.

"Prompt at meals!" she said aloud. "You might be, if we ran 'em along on a kind of a wire, so they'd stop whenever you happened to get to 'em, Miss!"

Sylvia came downstairs in twenty minutes, looking another girl from the one in the middy blouse and skirt who had dashed into the house.

She wore a daintily made, delicate-hued organdie, with bluets embroidered over it. Her hair, which the soft hat had covered, proved to be fine and abundant, of a beautiful warm, dark brown colour, with charming ripples in it, as it was caught back and fastened low in her neck. Her skin was tanned to a golden brown tint, guiltless of freckle or blemish. Her lips were full and red, her nose straight, well-cut, a proud

and sensitive delicacy in its nostrils. Her eyes were dark blue, with long dark lashes and decided, straight eyebrows. Altogether Sylvia Bell emerged from her hasty toilette as pretty a girl as one would ask to see, so pretty that her complete indifference to her looks was strange. She came running down the stairs—she rarely walked—singing gaily, her voice pleasant and true. At the foot of the stairs her father met her; he was coming out of the library to go to tea.

Sylvia pulled herself up sharply; instantly her song ceased. Hesitatingly she took another step downward, and dallied on the last step. She put out a hand, and quickly withdrew it.

“Good evening, father,” she said, almost timidly.

“Good evening, my dear,” said her father, and went on his way. Sylvia followed him, very quietly, moving slowly, looking shy and wistful.

The dining room of the Bell house was one of its most attractive rooms. It was large, its windows were opposite, down two sides of the room, and, because it was in an ell of the house, they faced both east and west, giving the room the advantage of the sunshine at breakfast, and the glories of sunset at tea.

Sylvia sat in her little-girl place at the side of the table. Mr. Bell sat at its foot. There was no one to preside, except when Mr. Bell's sister was there, the anxious Aunt Emily, Miss Bell, who came four times a year to supervise her niece's progress, and to provide each season's wardrobe. Cassandra Billings refused to make one of the family, though Sylvia had earnestly pleaded with her to do so.

"It's fearful to see a table with only two spots of people at it," the girl said. Indeed it was rather melancholy, and Sylvia's meals were often incomplete at this sparsely occupied board. She had a fine appetite, as one would have expected of her, but the silence and loneliness of the dining room depressed her, and she supplemented her meals at odd moments with generous levies on the pantry.

Mr. Clement Bell was a handsome man; Sylvia resembled him, except in expression. Where her father was grave, if not stern in expression, with the look of one who looked inward and not outward, Sylvia's face was all flashes of animation, kindled into life, as if it were faceted to catch every gleam of a mind that was eagerly interested in everything outside itself.

To-night the tea proceeded with its usual

grave decorum. Mr. Bell did not talk. Sylvia never ventured a remark to her father, except in reply to one from him. She stole glances at him sidewise from under her long lashes, but he did not see them. He seemed more than ordinarily abstracted, and drew a small diagram with his fork on the table cloth, evidently illustrating for his own enlightenment, some point which engaged his thought.

Sylvia ate her strawberries wishing that her father would say something, anything, to her. She was tempted to wish that Aunt Emily were there, but she hastily checked the thought. She knew that she would repent were the fates to take her at her word and send Aunt Emily to pour forth her steady stream of extremely minute small talk, most of which concerned Sylvia's welfare and ill-fare.

At last the tea was over, Mr. Bell pushed back his chair. Then he seemed to become dimly conscious of a duty unperformed.

"Have you had a pleasant day, little daughter?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, father," cried Sylvia, flushing with delight. "It was a lovely day, the day itself, and my own day."

Mr. Bell smiled condescendingly, as to the

small child which was his mental picture of the tall girl before him.

"Indeed!" he said. "And was it a compound day, my dear? A day that belonged to itself, and a day that was yours, personally?"

"Oh, yes, father!" cried Sylvia again. "All days are like that. Don't you think a day is like a lovely, great empty dish for each one to fill up with nice, or horrid, or tiresome things? I always think in the morning that I've got something like that, empty and big, to fill up as I please."

"Indeed, my dear! That's a quaint fancy, quite a pretty fancy, my dear," said Mr. Bell, gratified, as far as it penetrated his mind, to find his child playing with poetical images. "It's rather a poetical idea. Possibly you may have a little gift for poesy, when you are old enough. Your mother wrote pretty little verses; not remarkable, but really quite pretty. I think they have been preserved for you. One of these days, when you are old enough to understand poetry, they shall be given you."

"Oh, father!" gasped Sylvia. Her father had never talked to her about her mother, and she longed to hear of her from him, to get a different version, another portrait of that un-

known mother than Cassandra Billings could give her.

Sylvia felt that her clever father must have known totally different things about her mother than Cassandra would have been able to grasp.

"Oh, father" she repeated. "Do, do let me have them now! I love poetry, I read all the books in the library, even the great, great poets, everything! Oh, do let me see the verses, and—could you, would you tell me about mamma?"

Mr. Bell frowned and arose.

"Nonsense, my child, a little girl cannot understand the poets, though she may read them," he said. "I think I have heard it said that most children are pleased with rhyme and rhythm. All that you need to know, at your age, of your mother our good Cassandra, and, I suppose, your Aunt Emily, have told you. Run away and play, my child. You will have more than an hour to play before it is dark. You do not go to bed till it is dark, I suppose? Good night, my dear. Pleasant dreams."

Mr. Bell left the room, instantly immersed again in his own interests, promptly forgetting all about Sylvia.

The young girl arose and walked slowly out on the piazza, moving with none of her usual

springing gaiety of motion. Her eyes were full of tears, her lips drooped. There came over her a feeling of utter loneliness; she felt it increasingly as she grew older. She still romped and played like a child, but the woman's need of something to live for, some one who would love her first and last, whom she would love in like manner, was taking form and force within her. She dropped into the hammock and swung herself lazily, scuffing her slippered feet on the floor. There was nothing to do, no one with whom to do anything, were the first lack supplied; Sylvia felt dull dissatisfaction creeping through her.

O'Malley heard the creak of the hammock pulleys and the pat of Sylvia's feet as she swung.

Every night he listened for her coming after tea. Now he bounded up the steps, falling over one step in his eagerness to reach his mistress, leaped to her and laid his rough head on her knees, looking up at her with whole-hearted worship, quick to feel that she was not her merry self.

Sylvia's hands clasped the dog's face, one on each side of his sharp nose, her head went down on his, and she kissed him.

"O'Malley, Charles O'Malley, my blessed

dearest, whatever should I do without you, you loving Old Faithful?" she said, with a catch in her throat.

O'Malley made frantic efforts to get closer to Sylvia than the boundaries of her body and his own allowed. She laughed to see him wriggle in this praiseworthy attempt. O'Malley put his paws on the hammock, crawling by easy stages up higher, lifting one hind leg, then the other, hoping that he might get into the hammock beside Sylvia and put his head on her shoulder.

Sylvia's laugh rang out. With the disregard for her pretty frock that was the despair of her Aunt Emily and of Cassandra Billings, Sylvia put her arms around O'Malley, mid-way of his body, and helped him to accomplish his desire.

Heaving a sigh of profound contentment, O'Malley snuggled down beside her, his hind legs hanging over the hammock edge, his head on Sylvia's arm.

"Great to be one with me, like a real pal, isn't it, O'Malley?" Sylvia said sympathetically.

She twisted around so that she could get her head on the pillow without seriously incommoding O'Malley. Before the moon had come up girl and dog were sleeping, and thus Cassandra

found them when she returned from a visit which she had paid.

"I suppose she's been on the go all day, and it's natural she'd be sleepy at night, but it does seem kind of a pity she hasn't any company but that dog nights, and nothin' to amuse her more'n a nap!" thought Cassandra, looking down on the tableau, as vigilant O'Malley looked up at her.

The next morning Sylvia awoke, as all healthy girls of fifteen should awake, with the cloud that had settled upon her the night before completely cleared away by a good night's sleep and the radiant brightness of a new summer morning. Sylvia had meant to go on an expedition to the next town in the morning, but she strayed into the library, took down a volume of Sir Walter Scott, and straightway lost herself in "The Lady of the Lake," which she enjoyed the more for having already read it till she knew parts of it by heart.

This girl, with the love of adventure and sport, the hatred of restraint which were hers, was also a bookworm. At least she loved to read, was swept away by the beauty of poetry, kindled at romance, thrilled over mystery and the achievements of the heroes of history, and quivered

with sympathy over the misfortunes of the people in her favourite novels.

The library of the Bell house was extensive, filled with the best of English literature. Sylvia found there no trash to read, and she was unrestricted in her choice of its treasures. Romp as she was, allowed to grow up without the school discipline that most children share, Sylvia was well-read, in the true sense, far beyond her years. When, as on this morning, a book caught her in its spell, all else was forgotten, and she read with the same disregard of everything else with which she played, climbed, rode and sailed her boat.

When Sylvia emerged from "The Lady of the Lake" it was far too late to carry out her plan for that day.

In the afternoon, finding time hanging heavy on her hands, and deciding that her promise to go to Mrs. Leveritt's to tea allowed her no chance to begin anything really interesting before it was time to go, Sylvia whistled O'Malley on a walk, and went swinging down the street, singing as she went.

Now O'Malley did not hurt cats in their bodies, but he did hurt them in their feelings whenever opportunity offered. It offered on this walk.

A cat crossed O'Malley's path, and that Irishman gave chase, not with intent to harm her, should the unlikely happen, and he come up with her, but merely to stir her up a bit, and give her exercise

The cat ran, O'Malley after her. Sylvia whistled to him, but he pretended not to hear. He would not disobey her, but he did yield to the temptation to postpone obedience.

It cost him dear thus to dally with his conscience. The cat leaped upon a wall, O'Malley jumped after her, but the light puss had cleared all obstructions in her leap, while O'Malley plunged headlong into a cold frame which he had not noticed at the foot of the wall, yelped with fright and pain as the glass shattered beneath him, and came piteously back to Sylvia on three legs, holding up a fourth leg streaming with blood.

"See what comes of not minding your mother?" said Sylvia sternly, as she dropped on her knees to examine the wound.

The blood flowed so fast that Sylvia was frightened.

"You've cut an artery, I'm sure you have, O'Malley!" she cried, whipping up her skirt and tearing her petticoat into strips, indifferent

to her favourite embroidery. She had learned first aid, needing such knowledge in her venture-some career. She took a stick and twisted it into the bandage around the leg, above the cut. She bandaged the wound with mud, in default of anything else at hand, and sat down beside the road to wait developments and, she hoped, for aid.

Sylvia had the satisfaction of seeing that her treatment staunched the flow of blood, but O'Malley looked so despairing, and sighed so heavily, that her heart ached with fear. She held his head up close to her breast and murmured cheer and consolation in his ear, impatiently scanning the road all the while.

At last a wagon came along, driven by a youth of unattractive appearance. But the main thing in Sylvia's eyes was not by whom it was driven, but that it was drawn by a horse.

"Stop, please," she cried, starting up and carefully depositing O'Malley on the ground. "Charles O'Malley has been badly cut by a lot of glass; please help me get him into your wagon and take us home to Mr. Clement Bell's; there's where I live."

"Charles O'Malley! That dog? Say, some name! All right! what you say goes, I guess,"

said the young man, getting down, and rendering unconscious homage to Sylvia's talent for making every one do her will.

"You take his hind legs, I'll take his head," commanded Sylvia. "He won't bite me, and that way he can't bite you. Lift him easy; don't jar him! O'Malley, dearest, trust your mother; I'll look out for you."

The young man shook so with inward laughter that he could hardly perform his part of this ambulance work, but Sylvia was far too anxiously engrossed to see this. O'Malley was laid in the bottom of the cart, Sylvia climbed in after him, over the tailboard, and sat flat on the bottom of the cart, taking O'Malley's head in her lap.

"Please drive slowly over any rough places," she said to her charioteer as he got up on the seat. "I'll pay you fifty cents for taking us home."

But when the journey was made, and the patient put down on the grass of the Bell front yard, Sylvia, searching her pocket, found only a dollar bill in her possession.

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter. I was going to get a new fishing line with it, but I'd rather see O'Malley through than have the fishing line; take it," she said.

"Great Scot! O'Malley! What a name!" cried the young man, unable to get used to this extremely off-hand, extremely competent, and extremely pretty girl, with her wounded and strangely named dog. "I don't want anything fer bringing you, miss. Gosh, I got my pay all right, all right! Such a name! Hope he'll get well. Good day, miss."

"Good-bye," said Sylvia in the most friendly tone. "You've been fine, just great, to help me out. He'll get well; I'll make him. Stop here when you're passing later on, when the grapes are ripe. We've tons of them; I'd like to give you some. I'm no end obliged, really."

Sylvia devoted her afternoon to O'Malley, who developed a little fever and was inclined to make the most of his misfortune, appealing pathetically to Sylvia for her ceaseless caresses.

It was nearly six when Cassandra Billings came home from an afternoon's shopping to find Sylvia seated on the lawn babying her wounded Charles O'Malley.

"For pity's sake, Miss Sylvia, I thought you was goin' to tea at Mrs. Leveritt's!" she exclaimed, aghast at the sight.

"Mercy me, I forgot all about it!" cried Sylvia. "Isn't that awful? Of course I wouldn't

have left O'Malley; he's badly cut, Cassie, but I'd have telephoned if I'd thought of it. Oh, well, it doesn't matter much; I didn't want to go, and they probably wouldn't have liked me," she added.

wore a tie most harmonious with the shirt, tied so carelessly, so wide-spread and loosely knotted, that it was clear, even to Ruth's inexperience of scarf tying, that Lloyd had spent a long time getting that careless effect.

These two cousins sat down in their splendour to await their guest. Lloyd began to fidget after a quarter of an hour's waiting, but Ruth was motionless and patient.

"It is only a quarter to six, Lloyd," she said reproachfully, when Lloyd got up for the fifth time and changed his seat with a long-drawn sigh. "She may be particular about doing things right, and you're not expected to come long ahead of time when you're invited to a meal anywhere."

"She looked it, didn't she?" Lloyd demanded. "About the most doing-things-right kind I've ever seen! On the beach with that football shaped old salt, blowing a mouth organ for all she was worth! Did you see her hat?"

"Maybe she cares when it comes to the other side of things," Ruth persisted. "But it's time now. You don't suppose—Lloyd, she wouldn't—"

"Chuck us? Sure she would; she's done it, just that. Well, let her! That's the last I'll

bother with her. What did she say she'd come for, if she didn't mean it? Suppose she thinks it's fun to fool people; stuck on herself, prob'ly."

Lloyd glared at his white trousers and new pumps; they added venom to the sting of this insult.

Mrs. Leveritt, the cousins' sweet Aunt Helen, came out to them at this moment.

"Our guest must have failed us," she said. "I'm so sorry."

"And I'm plain mad, Aunt Nell!" said Lloyd.

"You said she was a nice girl, Aunt Helen; how can she break an engagement like this? Mamma says it's unpardonable to break an engagement to a meal, unless it is absolutely necessary—or to be late coming." Ruth looked up appealingly to her aunt.

"I really don't know a great deal about Sylvia Bell, that is about her in particular ways," said Mrs. Leveritt. "Everybody knows that she's a frank, fearless, fine sort of girl, who has grown up without any especial guidance. Her father is doing scientific work in his own private laboratory in his grounds. He does not consort with his neighbours, and I understand that he does not pay much attention to his only child. Yes, I did say Sylvia was a nice girl; I'm sure that

she is; perhaps, more than merely a nice girl. She strikes me as unusually high-minded, brave, and true, and, though she is a tomboy, she never does anything that is unworthy of a fine girl, as, I'm sorry to say, a good many girls whom she shocks by her daring carelessness may do. It is rude, of course, to fail us this way, but I can't help thinking there may be an excuse for her. She does not come here when there are no young people visiting me to attract her, but I have an impression that Sylvia Bell keeps her promises, and would never deliberately make trouble for any one."

"Well, it's half past six," sighed Ruth, rising. "She's certainly not coming, whatever her reason is."

"Great Scot, couldn't she at least telephone?" demanded Lloyd, and as he spoke the telephone bell rang in the hall.

Ruth sprang to answer it. "Hallo. This is Ruth Hapgood, yes. At Mrs. Leveritt's," Mrs. Leveritt and Lloyd heard her say.

"Oh, mercy, is it?" an eager voice at the other end of the wire cried with troubled emphasis. "I'm Sylvia Bell. I'm simply dead and buried with shame and sorrow! O'Malley, my dog, you know—O'Malley, Charles, yes.

Well, he chased a cat over a cold frame this afternoon, never saw it at all—*No!* Course he saw the cat; didn't see the cold frame. And the glass wasn't strong enough to hold up a wild Irishman like him, jumping on it, and it broke, and he got badly cut. I had to bind him up, and a cart came along, and I made the man take us home. And then Charles O'Malley got feverish, and he would have me hold him, and tell him I knew it was too awful for words—but he had to have the words all the same! O'Malley's a perfect mooncalf when he's hurt! So I sat on the grass, just plain SAT there, you know, coddling that Irish dragoon—he's more like a faded shamrock than a dragoon when he's wounded in his body, or in his mind—sat there till Cassandra Billings came home. And the first thing she said was: 'I thought you were going to tea at Mrs. Leveritt's!' And that was the very first minute I remembered it, not a half an hour ago! I'm curled all up with shame. I'm a terror about hating society and everything, but honest truth, I don't mean to be a regular outsider, and break an engagement. Will you please tell your aunt? Ask her to forgive me this time. I'm not going to tell lies, you see; no headache, or any of those things

people trump up. I plain *forgot!* But it isn't as bad as if anything else had made me forget, is it? O'Malley is my best friend, the only chum I have, and he was so dreadfully unhappy and hurt! Will you forgive me? And will you and that boy cousin of yours—I forget his name—go sailing with me to-morrow afternoon, just to show there's no bad feeling? Good. You're a trump. Good-bye. What do you suppose that person on this party line who's got her receiver down, listening, thinks of my story? Probably she's worrying for fear Charles O'Malley is some one I oughtn't to nurse. Good-bye."

Ruth turned away from the receiver fairly doubled up with laughter.

"Such a girl as she is!" she cried when she caught her breath. "There was some one listening; she was right. I heard the other receiver hung up with a bang!"

Ruth went back over Sylvia's rapid recital, ending with the slap which she had administered to some curious neighbour. Her aunt and Lloyd were shaking with laughter when she ended. Lloyd's anger against Sylvia evaporated as he heard his cousin's tale; by the time it ended he was back to his old desire to see this odd girl,

and this story had put a keener edge upon that old desire.

"Some girl that!" he said. "I don't blame her for forgetting a tea party when her dog was hurt. But, say, isn't she a great one? I'll be glad to go sailing, won't you, Ruth?"

"If it's safe," said Ruth dubiously.

"It is perfectly safe, Ruth," said Mrs. Leveritt. "Sylvia's boat is particularly well built, I mean on a rather unusually safe model, and the girl is as good a sailor as any man around here, so the men themselves say. They say that Sylvia seems to have a special sense of weather ahead, she is sensitive to coming changes, and she knows precisely what to do, and how to do it, in an emergency. She is not afraid but, on the other hand, she is never risky. No good sailor ever is foolhardy. It is only 'the landlubber' who is impertinent to the fearful powers of wind and wave. You need not be afraid to trust yourselves to Sylvia, my dears."

The next afternoon, therefore, Ruth and Lloyd set out for the Bell house. It was a good, old-fashioned house, built for comfort and durability. Its grounds were ample, its shade trees beautiful, and the flowers that bloomed in the side garden were a riot of colour and growth.

The cousins found Sylvia watching for them, seated on the front steps, one arm around the devoted but still bandaged O'Malley.

The girl wore a middy blouse and heavy duck skirt; the same damaged soft felt hat that she had worn when they first saw her now again covered her head. She jumped up to greet her new acquaintances, and held out her hand. All her indifference of manner had fallen from her; she was eagerly friendly, for she was sincerely sorry that she had failed them the previous day.

"You are a good sort!" Sylvia exclaimed, giving both Lloyd and Ruth a clasp of her firm-knit, long-fingered brown hand that made Ruth wince.

"Did you ever know such a thing as I am? But what are you going to do about it, when you've got the sort of brain that gets crowded-full of one idea, and is no earthly good for anything else while that's in it? Thank you; he's better," Sylvia added.

Ruth laughed; Lloyd stared. He was not as quick-witted as Ruth, and Sylvia puzzled him to such an extent that he could hardly follow what she said for trying to understand the speaker.

"Well, that's true; we didn't inquire for him,

did we? But I see he's able to sit up," Ruth said, looking down on O'Malley. "Is he getting on all right? Much hurt?"

"It was a nasty cut, but it's coming on all right," said Sylvia. "I've kept it wet with creoline, and he's not going to have any trouble with it. I'll take off the bandage to-night; he can do the rest better than I can. Knows what we're talking about; please look at that expression!"

O'Malley sat rolling his eyes from one to the other of the three looking down upon him. His expression was one of resignation, combined with self-pity, that sent Lloyd off into a peal of laughter.

"I believe I asked you to go sailing," Sylvia said in a business-like way. "We'd better start. I thought we'd go right down the harbour, toward the light. There's the best sort of a wind, steady, and it will hold till sunset, anyway. It's freshening up quite a lot, but it isn't choppy like that tricky sou'west wind. It's about east; two or three points north, maybe. We'll beat down, but we'll come up free. Like sailing?"

"We never sailed much," began Ruth, but Lloyd interrupted her.

"We never did much of it in a catboat," he

said, with a magnificent air of experience. "I've been out considerable, though."

He did not say that his going out had been on steamers; he hated to show this girl of his own age that she, who in all propriety should be his inferior, was decidedly his superior; in this sort of knowledge and skill, at least, and, as Lloyd shrewdly suspected, in most other sorts of lore.

"Well, I'll give you a good sail this afternoon," said Sylvia. "Are you going to wear that hat, Ru—Miss—" Sylvia stopped short.

"Oh, don't say miss!" cried Ruth. "Girls of our age! I'm Ruth; that was right."

"Good for you!" Sylvia approved her. "You see I didn't know what you'd want. I've never lived anywhere but here, so all the girls I know are born using one another's first names; thought perhaps you'd rather not. I don't like people to crowd me, get fearfully intimate right off, do you? But I can't bear nonsense—I mean society nonsense."

"I don't think really nice people are ever affected, do you?" returned Ruth. "My mother says that sincerity and simplicity are the two S's which stand for the seal—she means the seal of real nobility."

"You're a nice little thing!" said Sylvia,

almost affectionately. "I think O'Malley and I are going to like you. But you are a lucky girl to have a mother who says things like that to you. You see that smooths down the corners, yet leaves the whole of the thing there, as big as ever. I always supposed that was what a mother would do. When you're nothing but a youngster, finding out for yourself, and hating things a whole lot, and liking other things a lot, too, why you go at it too hard. I don't know how to tell you what I mean, but I know. I like the way your mother said that, for instance."

"I know exactly what you mean," said gentle Ruth, to Sylvia's relief, for she was instantly sorry that she had spoken as she had. "It's being mellow. My mother never bends one inch from what she thinks is best, but she is always sweet and patient with everything. Indeed, I am a lucky girl!"

Sensitive Sylvia felt the pity in Ruth's heart for her own motherless childhood. She loved Ruth for it, but she veered off from it, not wanting to risk its expression.

"So am I lucky," she said. "See that building over there? That's my father's laboratory. My father is a scientist, and he is there all the time, doing awfully important work. I don't

cheered up, very much as a small boy recovers from the overwhelming misery he endures before nine o'clock, and shows symptoms of complete recovery after school has well begun, and an interesting expedition is planned by other members of his family.

"All right, my dear; you surely may come," said Sylvia to the frisking terrier. "O'Malley would fade right away and die, if he couldn't go sailing with me. It's cruelly hard on him to have Sunday come. And I think he could perfectly well go to church with me; he'd never budge from my feet, but would lie quiet in the pew till I came out. Children make much more disturbance than he would. Come on, Ruth, Lloyd; come on, Charles O'Malley."

Lloyd had hardly spoken a word. He was so interested in this new acquaintance that words, always difficult to him, did not occur to him.

When they reached the beach and Sylvia untied her rowboat, Lloyd found, to his annoyance, that he did not understand the peculiar knot with which she had fastened it. But when it was untied, Lloyd pushed Sylvia away from the bow, peremptorily.

"Here's something I can do!" he said sharply,

and he shoved the small boat down the beach to the water with unnecessary speed and vigour.

"I suppose you can row," said Sylvia kindly, seeing that Lloyd hated this dependence upon a girl, "but I'm so used to going out to the moorings and striking the thing right, that maybe I'd better take us out."

So O'Malley went up into his seat in the very tip of the bow, and Ruth and Lloyd sat in the stern, while Sylvia rowed them out to the catboat, dancing on her moorings.

"What's her name?" asked Lloyd.

"*The Walloping Window Blind*," said Sylvia gravely.

"What!" cried Lloyd and Ruth together.

"Oh, don't you know Davy and the Goblin?" asked Sylvia. "What a shame! There are luscious verses in it; begin this way:

"A capital ship for an ocean trip
Was *The Walloping Window Blind*;
No gale that blew dismayed her crew,
Or troubled the captain's mind."

It's lovely! I'd like to say it to you, all of it, but not now. I know it by heart. So I called my boat after that one. She's nothing but a little catboat. I don't like dressy names, do you? There's a boy here named his boat the

Armada! I'm sure he thinks the *Armada* was one ship, and, anyway, his boat is about sixteen feet over all! Mine is twenty-two on her water line, about twenty-five over all. Just a little snip."

It was easy to see that Sylvia was tremendously fond and proud of her trig craft. She was a pretty thing, well-formed, broad amidship, with a slender bow, and pretty, sheer lines. She was painted white, with a stripe of blue where she sat on the water; hard wood, varnished trimmings, finished the inside of her standing room.

"I'll run up the colours first," announced Sylvia, having got her guests on board. "This is my private signal." She displayed the long blue pennant which had puzzled Ruth and Lloyd to make out when they had first seen the boat coming home. They saw now that it had a window blind embroidered on it, but no one could have been sure it was not a ladder after the pennant was fluttering on the end of the gaff.

Sylvia ran up the Stars and Stripes on the mast, unfurled her sail and hauled it up, permitting Lloyd to help her, though it made her nervous to watch his unaccustomed awkwardness; she saw that he was not happy to be the

man of the party, yet wholly unable to play a manly part.

"Now, then," said Sylvia, taking her place in the stern, her left hand on her tiller, the sheet in her right hand, "now then, Lloyd, let go the mooring, and sit down." Lloyd cast off, as he was bidden. *The Walloping Window Blind* swung around, felt for the wind an instant, as Sylvia played out the sheet and put her a little farther off; caught herself hesitating, filled her sail with the breeze; lay over to it and started off blithely, her snowy white sail filling more as she bent to her work and Sylvia altered her course a point or so, till the canvas was full to its throat, peaking up perfectly.

"How the boat slants!" cried Ruth, trying not to be nervous.

"Great!" said Lloyd briefly.

Sylvia gave him a glance of understanding sympathy. She stretched her slender length, bracing her feet and patting her tiller. Now, for the first time, it was the boy and not the girl, of her new acquaintances, with whom she felt at one.

"Nothing like it, nothing on this earth!" she said emphatically, "nothing matters when you're afloat."

CHAPTER IV

A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY

"Want to go right down to the light?" asked Sylvia after *The Walloping Window Blind* had got thoroughly under way, and they were sailing out of the bay on long tacks in the face of the brisk wind.

"It isn't far, is it?" asked Ruth, who was trying hard to enjoy herself, and succeeding about as well as any one ever does when there has to be an effort to enjoy.

"Oh, no, not far. We can easily make it, go on the island, see the lighthouse, if you want to, and get back in time for supper. We'll come up flying, free of the wind, if this breeze holds, and it's going to," said Sylvia easily.

"I'd like to see the lighthouse," said Lloyd. "Can you get into the lantern?"

"Oh, yes; the keeper is always willing to show it off. Lots of people go there when the hotels farther along the shore are full. I know him; I go there to fish; you get perch off those rocks," said Sylvia.

"Sylvia seems a dreadfully proper sort of name for you," said Ruth unexpectedly. "When we went to ask you to tea that day, and your housekeeper called you 'Miss Sylvia,' I thought you were dressed in stiff silk, and wore your hair tight back, and had a backbone that wouldn't bend, no matter what happened."

Sylvia arose, still keeping the sheet in her hand, bracing the tiller against her knee. She bent forward till her head almost touched the floor. Her young back was as straight and slender, her shoulders as square and firm-set as any boy's. She had a boyish straightness of figure, a boy's free, strong motions, combined with a certain girlish roundness and delicacy of line, and she could bend as if she were a young willow, and not a human creature of bone and muscle.

"You see I can bend," Sylvia said, catching her tiller and playing out her sheet as her boat altered her course a few points, owing to Sylvia's change of position.

"We knew that before, as soon as we saw you," said Ruth. "But that was the way your name sounded."

"I know it does, sounds like lace mitts, and high back combs, like the ladies in 'Cranford,'" agreed Sylvia.

"I don't know what they're like," said Ruth. "Do you mean Cranford, New Jersey? I was never there."

Sylvia stared at her for an instant. It seemed to her that no one could be as nice as Ruth was, and not know Mrs. Gaskell's wonderful book. It was as much second nature to Sylvia to live in books, as it was to live her wild, free life.

Then she recovered herself and said, speaking carelessly:

"No, I never have been to Cranford, either. I mean ladies in a perfectly dear little book, old-fashioned, stiff, ducks of ladies. The book is called 'Cranford.' 'Miss Sylvia' sounds as if I belonged in that Cranford. It would drive me crazy, if I did live there, but I'd love to go there for a visit. Now you know me, you don't think I'm a regular Miss Sylvia, do you?"

"I certainly do *not*," said Ruth emphatically.

"I was named for a grandmother," Sylvia went on. "I used to hate the name, but now I'm getting used to it. There's one thing: I like outdoor things so much, that, if you forget about the old-fashioned side of it, and just remember that it's a woodsy name, it isn't so bad."

"That's so!" cried Lloyd, cheering up at a chance to say something brilliant. "Pennsylvania means Penn's woods! Sylvania, same's your name, isn't it?"

"Pretty much," said Sylvia. "I'm glad it isn't quite the same! 'Sylvia Bell' sounds like a brook to me, something tinkling in the woods."

"Oh, my! Tinker Bell! That's you!" cried Lloyd. "I saw Peter Pan once. Don't you remember that fairy that followed around after Peter? Tinker Bell, she was. The one that did things. You do things, and you're—you're—I don't know just what, different, you know. I'm going to call you Tinker? Care? It's a great old nickname for you. Like it? Tinker; hallo, Tink! Tink! Say, that's good!"

Sylvia looked uncertain for a moment whether to resent or to applaud Lloyd's discovery. Then she shrugged her shoulders and laughed.

"I don't know whether that's any better than Sylvia or not; but it's enough different if that's all! Doesn't sound stiff, that's one sure thing! I don't care, if you like it. Do you like it, Ruth? Seems to me you haven't talked much, and you look pale. Nothing wrong, is there?" Sylvia asked, bending forward.

"I feel quite queer," said Ruth slowly.

"Quite queer. I think I like Tink for a sort of pet-name, but I can't seem to tell. I feel funny. Does your boat always go up and down this way, Sylvia?"

"Mercy me, is that it?" cried Sylvia, alarmed. "I never would have thought of that! I never was seasick in my life, but then I don't remember when I first went on the water. I was born web-footed, I think, like all other little geese! Lloyd, you don't mind it, do you?"

"Well, no," said Lloyd, hesitatingly. "Not mind it, but it does go up-and-down. I'd just as lief it wouldn't dip down and come up this way; it's more like a rocking horse than I need."

"Well, mercy me!" sighed Sylvia again. "Did I ever think of upsetting you! It is quite choppy; it will be smooth coming up. I'll tell you, maybe you're hungry. Sailing makes anybody ravenous, and when you're ravenous you may feel as if you were sort of sick."

"I've been very hungry at home, lots of times, and it never made me seasick," said Ruth plaintively.

"Well, of course it didn't, not on land," said Sylvia. "But I mean it makes some people feel sick to be out when it's so rough and when

they're hungry. I put a lot of stuff in my hold, there, this morning, in case we wanted to land and eat a picnic lunch. I've got plenty to eat, all sorts of things," repeated Sylvia, not knowing from experience how her statement would sound to a victim of the sea. Ruth shuddered violently, and Lloyd made a repellent motion with one hand.

"It will set you right up," declared Sylvia. "I know it will. I'll run *The Walloping*—I call her *The Walloping* for short, her whole name's too long; isn't that a touching name for her? I'll run into a cove over on that nearest island, and tie up to the dock there. Then we'll get out and eat a good meal on the grass. And then we'll start home; we won't try the light to-day."

"If I climbed up into that lighthouse you'd have to bury me at sea," Ruth said with miserable conviction. "A high place would settle me."

"All right, honey; you shall have the lowest place I can find," laughed Sylvia.

"And I do *not* want one mouthful to eat," continued Ruth.

"No, I don't either, Tinker Bell," said Lloyd. "I'm not seasick, you know, but it makes me

a little, just a very little, dizzy. So I'd rather not eat, thank you."

Lloyd tried vainly to repress a shudder that the idea of food called forth, and glanced hastily at Sylvia to see if she had noticed it.

It was safe to assume that Sylvia noticed most things; her eyes, her ears and her brain were remarkably quick.

"No, you're not in the least upset, Lloyd; only dizzy!" she laughed. "But I'm sure you'll be all right after you have lunch."

Sylvia ran her boat into the wharf which had been built on the neighbouring island for pic-nickers to land. She did this with such skill that it was a pity that neither of her guests paid any attention to her feat.

She made her sheet fast to a cleet, strapped her tiller with a leather strap placed conveniently for that purpose, ran up the cockpit, snatched the boat hook, vaulted to the deck, and swung into the tiny space before the mast, one arm around the mast to hold by. In the other hand she poised her boat hook, like a young Amazon with a harpoon, drove it into the wharf at the right instant, and swung *The Walloping Window Blind* alongside without a scratch or a jar.

O'Malley watched her skill admiringly, but then he had often seen her perform this sort of feat. Lloyd and Ruth watched her dully, not interested in it.

Sylvia made her craft fast, hung out her fenders, so that the bumping would not scratch her paint, and turned cheerily to her crew.

"Come on; I'll help you. Brace up, Ruthie! Lloyd, you're all right if you make up your mind to it. Lend a hand getting out the stuff in the hold, can you?"

Lloyd made an effort, while Ruth, having been helped to the wharf, sat down on a bench that ran along its side, farther up, and dropped her aching head on her arms folded along the back of the bench.

Sylvia did almost all the work of exhuming her generous store of provisions. She brought out crackers, a cake, olives, cucumber pickles, sandwiches, a jar of peanut butter, a box of assorted chocolates, and a thermos bottle of cold milk.

"Now," said this well-meaning, but not wholly wise prescriber of relief measures, "I'm going to make you eat all this, unless there's something here one of you doesn't like. And after that you'll be ready to dance a sailors' hornpipe on a nickel."

Ruth smiled wanly; she had obeyed Sylvia's urgent summons to arouse and join the other two. They were going to spread their banquet on the grass which ran down to the shore of this pretty wooded island, because there was so much to eat that a more distant site would not have been practical.

Lloyd suddenly felt that Sylvia was right and that food would revive him. He urged Ruth to make an effort, to begin to eat.

"Just start in," Lloyd said as well as he could with a cracker, thickly spread with peanut butter, parting mid-way as he bit it, "then you'll feel morish; that's the way it is with me."

Ruth followed this advice, much against her own judgment. Sylvia and O'Malley ate enthusiastically; there was no mistake about their appetite, nor their perfect ability to cope with it. Sylvia divided her share with O'Malley justly, if not generously, except the pickles and olives, but she made up for these being distasteful to the terrier by extra bites of the things he did like.

"It seems to me that peanut butter isn't good for me," said Ruth, refusing Lloyd's offer to spread a cracker for her. "Seems to me salt crackers, lots of salt, are better. I think I'll eat

the cake, because I do love caramel filling, and we never have it. I feel as though I'd die, most likely, from eating anything, but you make me, and if I'm going to die of it, I'd rather die of something nice, that I never get at home, than of peanut butter. We have that for school lunch till— Oh, dear, won't you talk about something, Sylvia? I don't want to remember food; it's bad enough to eat it. Talk about something else, so I'll forget it and try to stand it."

"It isn't easy to talk to order," said Sylvia. She looked anxiously at Ruth. It seemed to her that Ruth was getting not merely pale, but green-tinted. "I certainly hope it was right to make her eat!" she thought.

Lloyd was by no means a good colour. Sylvia's heart sank as she thought of being alone on this island with two sick companions and no one but herself to look after them, nor to sail them home.

"Talk about Robinson Crusoe!" thought Sylvia. "I never heard that Man Friday was sick on his island!"

"I'll tell you how I got hold of O'Malley when he was a poor little abused pup, if you like," Sylvia said aloud, eyeing her companions with her brows drawn.

She began her story with all the animation that she could summon. Ruth endured it patiently for a while; Lloyd did not try to conceal his indifference to it. Both had stopped eating, and were certainly growing paler.

At last Ruth threw up her arms with a tragic gesture.

"I'm going away to die!" she gasped, arose, staggered up the bank, and disappeared among the trees.

"Same here!" Lloyd managed to say, and he, also, sought solitude.

"O'Malley, my dearest," said Sylvia tragically, "this is worse than broken glass and cut arteries!"

Poor Sylvia had not the least idea how to deal with the situation. She felt guilty to be doing nothing for Ruth and Lloyd, but what to do she had not the most remote knowledge.

She crept after the sufferers and softly called: "Ruth! Ruth! Lloyd! Want something? Want me to get you water, or—or— Oh, yes! Milk out of the thermos, all cold?"

The groan that this offer elicited frightened Sylvia away from so much as trying to frame another. She returned to her post on the wharf and waited.

After a while she went back again. Lloyd lay curled up, sleeping, his head upon his arm. Ruth had withdrawn completely from Lloyd's neighbourhood. She lay upon her side, revealing such a drawn and ghastly profile that Sylvia was more frightened than ever.

"Oh, Ruth, you poor dear, do you feel so bad?" cried Sylvia, kneeling beside her.

"I'm dying," said Ruth faintly, but with entire conviction. "Will you send my pinkie ring—to—to my best friend? Mamma will know; Dot always loved it."

Tears crept out under Ruth's eyelids. It seemed to her most piteous that she, so young, so beloved, her mother's one daughter, should be dying, cast away on an island, with only an unknown girl to hear her last words, and to receive her farewell messages.

"Mercy! You're not dying!" Sylvia almost laughed. "I've heard they always think they are, want to, what's more!"

"I don't want to," moaned Ruth, "but I'm willing to. It doesn't matter. I'd like to leave you something to remember me by. I like you a great deal, for such a short time. If only there was a telephone on this island, so you could let Aunt Helen know!"

"There isn't," said Sylvia decidedly. "There isn't a house. See here, Ruth, you've got to pull together. I must sail you home, and I don't want to be out after dark. There's a good breeze, but you never can tell what may happen—allow time, that's my motto; time for a calm, or anything. Try to get up; I'll help you. Then come down to the boat. I'll fix a bed for you on the floor, and you'll be all right. You see we've got to start home, there're no two ways about it, so brace up, and be a hero!"

"Get into that boat, and sail home, *sail!*" cried Ruth with unexpected animation. "Never! I'll stay here all night and be eaten by wolves first!"

"You'd be eaten by mosquitoes, probably, but never by a wolf," laughed Sylvia. "How do you expect to get off an island except by water? Come on, Ruth; be sensible. It won't be rough going back; we'll sail free of the wind. We struck the waves sidewise, tacking down, and they did churn us up some; won't going back. Anyway, there's no use talking, we've got to go, and I don't dare wait. Please try to get up, Ruth; I'm sorry as I can be, but I don't dare hang around here longer."

Ruth made a feeble effort to rise and sank back with a groan.

Sylvia wrung her hands despairingly, but at that instant Lloyd came slowly toward them.

"Gracious! You look like Tennyson's poem! 'Home they brought her warrior dead'!" cried Sylvia, divided between a desire to laugh and to cry nervously. "And my little old *Walloping Window Blind* will look like Elaine's barge, the one she floated down the river on, after she was dead, when I get you two lying down in her, one on each side of the centreboard! Do you feel the way you look, Lloyd?"

"If I look as bad as I feel, I do," returned Lloyd, who was beginning to recover. "If this is what seasickness is like, then if I'd been Columbus, or the Pilgrim Fathers, or any of the bunch, I'd never have taken those voyages for any old land—or new one either—on the market."

"Maybe they were like you to-day, didn't know how bad it was till they tried it," suggested Sylvia. "See here, Lloyd, I'm trying to get Ruth to pull herself together and let me take you home. It's time we were off. Help her up, won't you? I'll take one side of her, and

you the other—only goodness knows whether you can hold yourself up or not!”

“I’ll make a stagger at it—stagger’s the word, when you think of it!” Lloyd grinned. “Come on, Ruth; we’ve got to play up.”

Sylvia and Lloyd dragged limp Ruth to her feet, groaning and gasping, and looking so exhausted that in her heart Sylvia was thoroughly frightened.

By slow stages and tremendous effort they got the girl down to the wharf.

“If only I had the right thing to give her!” sighed Sylvia, surveying the fragment of their lunch. “I’m never sick, so I don’t carry anything for it. I’ll have the right medicine in my cuddy before I ever take out any more land specimens, you may bank on that! Try a glass of milk, Ruth; there doesn’t seem to be anything else that isn’t dangerous.”

Ruth shuddered and turned away speechless.

“Well, then, ‘the sooner it’s over, the sooner to sleep, though the harbour bar be moaning.’ I don’t know whether that belongs together, or not,” said Sylvia. “I’ll fix up the floor as soft as I can with what I brought, and you two lie down on the coats. I’ll get you home as well and as quick as I can.”

Talking fast, Sylvia shook out the coats which she had crammed into the hold, took down the cushions which fitted the seats running around the cockpit, and laid them on the floor with their edges touching.

"They don't fit very well, but it's the only mattress there is," Sylvia said apologetically. "Ruth's shivering; you'll have to have the coats over you."

"See here, Tink, I'm not going to lie down!" Lloyd announced with sudden energy. "There aren't too many coats to keep Ruth comfortable; she's cold because she's all in. I'll sit up. And I believe I'll eat a cracker or two; I kind of feel peckish."

"Oh, thank goodness, for a sign of life!" ejaculated Sylvia fervently. "All right, Lloyd; you're a man after my own heart to try to be chipper when you're not. And Tink sounds jolly; I like my new nickname. Let's get Ruth down. Steady, mate!"

Sylvia put up her hands and took hold of Ruth's shoulders, while Lloyd lifted her bodily from the wharf, down into the boat. Sylvia tucked Ruth under the coats and made her as comfortable as she could, talking nonsense so infectiously that Ruth was won

to a pale smile, over which Sylvia openly triumphed.

Sylvia hoisted sail, untied her scientific knot that held her boat to the bollard on the wharf, pushed off with her boat hook, leaped from the deck into the standing room, skillfully avoiding Ruth, and seized her tiller, swung the boat around, pushed out her sail by the end of the boom, so that it would catch the wind, seated herself at the helm with a long sigh, played out the sheet to its full length, and settled down for a steady run home, free of the wind.

O'Malley and Lloyd watched her with open admiration. Ruth's eyes were closed, she lay like a spent creature, breathing short through parted lips, past taking any interest in what befell her.

"You're a wonder, Tink!" said Lloyd. "You beat me; I couldn't do that."

Sylvia gave him a merry smile and a kindly nod.

"You're a land insect; I'm a shrimp. No reason why you should know sea things on land. You'd beat me out in your line; that's the way things are," she said.

"I wonder!" said Lloyd, and relapsed into silence.

The wind lightened as the sun sank down, but *The Walloping Window Blind* came on steadily. "Only," Sylvia said, "she had to walk where I'd meant her to run." Sylvia's eyes were everywhere, she did not miss an opportunity to push her little craft into a trifling gain of speed, she saw everything that floated by, saw each gull that dipped and rose in the wake of distant steamers, read the flags which to Lloyd were merely blurs of colour in the strong light.

She did not talk much, sometimes she whistled through her teeth, sometimes hummed, but Lloyd found her silence companionable and had no sense of being neglected.

After a while O'Malley came carefully down from his post beside the mast and sat down in front of Sylvia, looking up at her pleadingly.

She nodded at him, closing her eyes to heighten her assent, and smiling at the dog. O'Malley jumped up on the seat and stretched out full length on his mistress' right hand, his head on her knee, where he quickly went to sleep.

"Old Solomon! Would you believe it? He never tries to lie here when we're tacking, knows we'd be coming about and he couldn't lie here. But when we're running free, O'Malley's never satisfied to stay forward. Wise, for a

worthless terrier, isn't he?" Sylvia said proudly.

The west was in a blaze of glory when Sylvia brought her boat up to her moorings and skillfully caught the float that held her rowboat.

"That's your aunt on the beach with Gabriel Gaby," Sylvia said as she rapidly furled her sail. "I'm afraid she's been worrying about you, but Gaby'd tell her it was all right. Gabriel Gaby thinks nothing can happen to me, that I can't drown, I guess. I don't know whether that's a compliment, or not."

Ruth aroused to an interest in life only when she was told to get up and step into the rowboat.

"How do you feel?" Sylvia asked her anxiously.

"Rather like a lamb chop," Ruth said, and Sylvia shouted.

"Hurrah! I don't know how a lamb chop feels, but I think you feel better," she cried.

Mrs. Leveritt was on the edge of the beach when Sylvia's tender ran up on it. "Oh, my dears, I had no idea you would be gone so long; I've been rather frightened!" she cried, looking curiously at Sylvia. Her nephew and niece had aroused her interest in this girl.

"Dreadfully sorry," Sylvia said, meeting

Mrs. Leveritt's keen, kind eyes frankly. "We stayed so long because we had such a horrid time, Mrs. Leveritt. We're just like Perry, the other way about: We met the enemy and we were his."

"What do you mean, child?" laughed Mrs. Leveritt.

"I'll never tell!" said Sylvia with a twinkle, as she made fast her tender. "People are usually ashamed of it, I think. But Gabriel Gaby told me he had a fearful time getting seasoned, when he first shipped, didn't you, Gaby? I'll take you two sailing again—in a calm! Good-bye, Ruth, good-bye, Lloyd!"

Sylvia bade Mrs. Leveritt good night more formally, whistled O'Malley, and raced off at top speed down the beach, jamming her shapeless hat down on her head as she ran.

Lloyd's voice pursued her crying:

"Good night, Tink! Thanks!"

"Good night, good-bye, Syl—Tink!" Ruth echoed, and turned away with her aunt.

The voyage in which several things had been discovered was safely ended.

CHAPTER V

"THE EX-HOUSE"

Sylvia came running downstairs, leaning her weight over the handrail of the banisters. Thus she got much of the pleasure of sliding down the rail, without the impropriety of doing so, which would have been likely to outrage Cassandra Billings if done by "such a great girl as Miss Sylvia."

Cassandra met Sylvia as she descended.

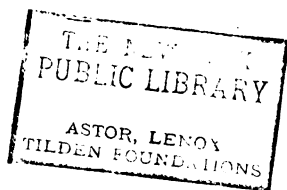
"What are you goin' to do this morning, Miss Sylvia?" she asked in a tone that implied that, whatever it was, it would better not be done.

"Tramp," Sylvia briefly replied. "Why?"

"I wish I could get you to let me show you something about housework," said Cassandra mournfully. "You don't know about it any more'n your dog does. I tremble to think what'd become of you if you was left to yourself to get a meal, or clear it away. And I'll tell you the truth, Miss Sylvia; there's danger you may have to do it. Susie isn't half fit to be on



“ ‘Never have I heard of a house being here! We’ve got to investigate it. . . . It’s a little house, so it won’t take long.’ ”



her feet this mornin', and I'll be surprised if the other half isn't taken away from her by night; she's sick. And I'll have to go to my sister-in-law, if she's any worse, as it's likely she will be. So by mornin' there's a good chance of your bein' alone in this house to do for your father and yourself the best you can. I've asked around, and there isn't one person to get to come in for a day, not now. It's dreadful to think you've been allowed to grow up ignorant of womanly duties, but, though I've done my best, I can't seem to catch you to put sense into your head. You slip right through my fingers. Why can't you let me show you how to do something this mornin'?"

Sylvia sat down on the lower stair to give up her whole mind to wheedling.

"I feel it in my bones that I'm going to be slippery again, Cass dear," she said. "There's something calling me to go for a long walk, an *exploring* long walk, where I've never been before."

Sylvia broke off to sing with the highest sentimental effect several bars of "I Hear You Calling Me." Then she resumed:

"Let's be reasonable; there's nothing worse than to be unreasonable, Cassandra! You

couldn't teach me the whole duty of woman in one morning. I'd be sure to muddle things if I tried to cram for to-morrow. Maybe I'd do perfectly awful things, because I'd just learned so many! Suppose I peeled a beefsteak, and broiled a potato with its skin on, whole, round, you know!" Sylvia chuckled. "Better let me start in untaught, then I can't do unnatural things, anyway! Don't look so discouraged, poor Cassandra. I'm pretty sure I'll come out half-way decent when I've got to. Housework can't be harder than things I do pretty well. I've an idea anybody can do anything, if she puts her mind on it, and wants to do it—it's the wanting that's the main thing. And honestly, Cass, I don't want to do things when I don't want to! Strange, but true! I don't see any sense in being miserable ahead of time. I want to tramp this morning. I'll be domestic one of these days, and when that time comes I'll just have to muddle along, making mistakes, till I learn how not to make them."

"You talk nonsense, Miss Sylvia, clear nonsense," said Cassandra with a sort of resigned despair. "You certainly would expect a girl of your age, always readin' books, to have more sense! Who ever heard of a person not bein'

trained to do the work in the world cut out for 'em? Would you let any one who'd never been in a boat sail yours for you? Would you expect your father to build a house, or an automobile without learnin' carpenter work, or a machinist's trade? It's dreadful to grow up and not know how to run your own house. What good's a woman that is no good? At her own job, I mean? I feel guilty to see the way you go on, but what can I do? I've no authority over you, and your Aunt Emily's not here, and your father doesn't know you are here, seem's if!"

Sylvia sprang to her feet, for when Cassandra fell into this bemoaning vein she knew the talk was over till the next time, when Cassandra would helplessly say precisely the same things, and again and yet again.

Sylvia caught the gaunt woman around the waist and spun her around in a rapid two-step several times before Cassandra could free herself.

"You poor, conscientious Cassandra!" she cried. "Ain't it awful! But I'm not without hope of being somebody, some time. I'll go into training by and by, truly! Winter's the best time—unless there's good coasting and skating!"

Sylvia danced off to eat her solitary breakfast. Her father breakfasted at an early hour, often did not breakfast, but went out with his man, Eben Tompkins, without so much as a cup of coffee. It was understood that these expeditions bore, in some way, upon Mr. Clement Bell's scientific work, but his household had no idea how.

Sylvia laid a barricade of magazines up before her plate. Against these she propped "Barnaby Rudge," which she was reading for the fifth time. She pushed a tall silver spoonholder against one page of her book, a squat sugar bowl against the other. Then she fell upon her breakfast, to which she did full justice, though she was not consciously following its flavours, being lost to all things, including her own palate, in the fine flavour of a book she loved.

She had been through eating several minutes before the end of a chapter aroused her to the fact. She cleared away her magazines and "Barnaby," less from a desire to set the table in order for Susie, the handmaid, to take it in charge, than from distrust of Susie's fingers, combined with books. In the care of her books no old-fashioned housewifely girl could have exceeded Sylvia.

Sylvia ran off immediately after she had carried away the book and magazines. A kinder girl never lived, but she forgot all about Susie's indisposition; Cassandra's anxiety for the girl had not made any impression upon Sylvia's mind, largely because Cassandra was always apprehensive of some evil, and lectured Sylvia helplessly and futilely a great deal of the time.

In five minutes after she had left the dining room, Cassandra saw Sylvia racing madly toward the dunes, bareheaded, O'Malley leaping and bounding up to her, girl and dog rejoicing in the clear, bright morning air and in each other's companionship. Cassandra sighed, but she also smiled. She dearly loved Sylvia, and the girl was a glad sight as she ran, irresponsible as a gull, happy and beautiful in the golden morning sunshine.

Sylvia ran for a long distance; this was her customary way of taking a walk. At last the heat of the sun's rays, strong, though the day was cool for a summer one, checked her, and she walked briskly out over the dunes.

Although her entire fifteen years of life had been spent in this spot, there was a woodsy, unkempt place considerably up the shore which

she had never investigated, and thither she was bound this morning.

She turned aside from the road that ran over the dunes, turned aside, also, from the paths which, more or less distinctly, marked the course followed by strollers along this height.

Sylvia's objective point this morning lay north of her father's house. Ragged Japanese types of scraggly pines and firs were grouped together in a sort of ravine, into which two dunes gradually sloped. Other trees, bayberry bushes, barberry bushes, also, and brambles grew here, and some courageous wild roses ventured to attempt to beautify a spot that needed such offices.

Sylvia shoved her way into this thicket which grew higher than her head. She sacrificed her hands and arms to her exploring spirit, emerging from successive contests with the thick, wild growth scratched and bleeding, but working toward victory.

O'Malley followed without allowing himself to criticise this singular choice of direction for a pleasure walk. His queen could do no wrong, but O'Malley was conscious that, left to himself, he would certainly not have chosen this place for an excursion. Further than that his loyalty

would not allow his condemnation of the ravine to go, but he had to repress a temptation to whine when he repeatedly caught his rough coat on wicked thorns.

Sylvia disentangled him each time, doing her best not to pull his hair.

"Pretty awful, isn't it, old man?" she said sympathetically. "But we have to see it through. I've an idea there's something interesting here. There's one thing to comfort you, Charles O'Malley; your clothes will come out of it fit to wear, but I doubt I'll ever be able to put on this dress again, and I like it best of anything I have to wear hiking."

Sylvia and O'Malley fought their way further. Suddenly Sylvia stopped short, with a sharp little cry which sent O'Malley recklessly nosing ahead for a few feet to discover what threatened his mistress.

He found nothing and returned with a reproachful question in his eyes.

"No, there isn't anything there, not the sort of thing you meant, Charles dear," Sylvia said, patting him hard. "Nothing dangerous. That isn't why I cried out. But, look down there, to the left! Isn't that a house? Course it is, or was; it's an ex-house, I'm after thinking! You

see, O'Malley, I'm speaking Irish to you to cheer you up. You're such a darling to come all the way, even though you are pulled to pieces! Never, in all my life, have I heard of a house being here! We've got to investigate it, my broth of a boy! Come on. It's a little house, O'Malley, my treasure, so it won't take long. Maybe it's haunted! Mercy, I wonder whether I'd be scared to death, or sort of like to see something like that, if it were haunted?"

Sylvia went on, whistling, perhaps to keep up her courage.

The house ahead of her had never been painted; it was black from years of weather-beating. It was but a story and a half high, a small square building, with sharp gables which afforded two rooms in the upper story.

There was no difficulty in making entrance to it; the locks had rusted out, the latches had followed them. Sylvia cautiously pushed back the rear door and peered in, holding her skirts tight drawn between her knees. The place was thickly hung with spiders and cobwebs, and Sylvia suspected mice and rats, of which, in spite of her boyish sort of courage, she had a truly feminine dread.

O'Malley kept close at her side, his ears stiff,

his legs and tail stiffer, his quivering black nose extended, his wiry hair erect.

"No likee, Charles O'Malley?" asked Sylvia. "Neither do I, not any too well. But it doesn't seem to have any harm about it, this little shack, and you must confess it's interesting."

She went into the house and investigated it throughout, downstairs in every cupboard and corner, upstairs as thoroughly. She found nothing but dust and webs, the house was barren of everything. Its small window-panes had been broken in many places, the rains of all the years and the snows of all the winters had beaten in to hasten the decay that was fast crumbling the little old house.

Sylvia went out by the front door; one was as much front as the other, for that matter, for the house stood in the ravine, facing nowhere.

"The saying is that it brings company to come in one door, and go out another," Sylvia said, "but we are not superstitious, O'Malley, and I don't believe anything could bring company here."

There was a plot of soil beyond the house overgrown with ordinary garden weeds. Around the other three sides of the house was the same

tangled mass of shrubs and brambles which made difficult the approach to it.

"Once there was a garden here, O'Malley," Sylvia pointed out to her comrade. "And it seems to me that there was a path that ran down to the beach. Let's try it."

Girl and dog pushed their way in the direction in which Sylvia thought had once run a path to the bay. It was a tedious descent, but each step proved her right. When they had crept down the steep, rough slant from the ravine, and reached the shore, Sylvia exclaimed in surprise.

She found herself in a small cove, washed out, evidently, by the high tides, and completely concealed from any one on the bay, or on the beach, for that matter, by a great rock at its mouth and a few scraggly trees, around which one would have to pass to get out of the cove.

"Well, of all things!" cried Sylvia aloud. "I though I knew every inch of this beach, but I'd no sort of notion there was an inlet behind this rock! I wonder who knows about this place? I'll ask Gaby. I must show it to Ruth and Lloyd Hapgood. No, I won't! Not now, anyway. It's rather nice to have a lair all our own, isn't it, O'Malley? What shall we pretend

it is? You be an Irish prince. You can't pretend you're a missionary, O'Malley, because that would be irreverent, but all the lovely Celtic saints seem to have lived in caves, most of them on the coast of Scotland, which I always thought was queer, if they were Irishmen. We'll probably not be able to make-believe about it, because, alas and alack and woe's me, my sweetest Harp-that-Once-Through-Tara's-Halls, we've grown too old for nice make-believe! But we will have it for a secret. I won't even ask Gaby about it. Half the time one loses all the fun when some one tells the true story of what you thought was a fine mystery! I wonder who does know about this place? It's queer I never heard of it! I don't believe a whole lot of people do know about it, or I should have heard of it. Shall we go home, O'Malley? It was a fearfully pulling, snarling walk here, wasn't it, my Home Ruler? But wasn't it worth it?"

O'Malley enthusiastically assented. He caught the excited happiness in Sylvia's voice and echoed it in his sympathetic bosom—also in a few sympathetic barks, which Sylvia promptly silenced by a hand clasping his pointed nose.

"Charles O'Malley, dear, we must speak softly

here. This is to be a secret. If you want to gloat, like those awful boys in 'Stalky and Co.,' you must do it quietly, in your heart, not give yourself away to all the world. Oh, I'm not blaming you, dog of the world; you're the broth of a boy, best dog ever! Cheer up, O'Malley!"

O'Malley's sensitive spirits had drooped at the note of correction in Sylvia's voice, but he recovered at once when she lavished upon him these praises, accompanied by violent hugging, and he prepared to beat his way through the undergrowth once more "with a heart for any fate."

But Sylvia had a brilliant idea that spared poor O'Malley's unfortunate coat and further damage to her own lacerated garments and flesh. With an indifference to getting wet that equalled the dog's, Sylvia walked down the cove, into which the incoming tide had crept to the depth of several inches, swung out around the great boulder that hid the entrance, came forth upon the beach and went home along its fine sand. That she was a spectacle to arouse wonder did not trouble her. Her skirt was torn, as was her blouse; a long red mark across one cheek had been left when a branch had struck her; her hands and arms were not only scratched,

but the blood still dripped a little from the latest and freshest of these wounds. Her hair, bare to the wind and brambles, was pulled out into long wisps, and considerably tangled, but these things bothered Sylvia not at all.

She swung along the beach, whistling as she came, her mind occupied with conjectures about her discovery, in a high state of satisfaction with her morning and all the world.

Thus she arrived at home, O'Malley beside her, and thus she came upon her father.

Mr. Bell looked at his daughter in the unseeing way in which his eyes usually rested upon her. Then something in her appearance that was out of the ordinary apparently filtered through the abstractions of his brain, and he looked at her again, quite sharply.

"My dear," he said in a startled tone, "what has befallen you? Are you hurt? Has any one attacked you? You are actually bleeding!"

Sylvia flushed crimson, the red mark on her cheek hardly showed, merged as it was in the intensity of her blush. Tears of delight sprang into her eyes, she trembled. Her father noticed that she had been hurt! He was anxious about her!

"It isn't anything, father—thank you ever so

much!" she said fervently. "I went through a place overgrown with brambles, and I got badly scratched up. No one attacked me. I suppose it does look pretty awful. I'm glad— You're kind to— I'll be all right after I've cold creamed for a day or two."

Sylvia came forward a few steps, timidly smiling. She did so wish that she dared to touch her father! She would have liked to throw her arms around him and kiss him, as she saw other girls greet their fathers, but she would be content if she could lay her hand on his arm and pat it. She wished that she dared think that he would like it if he knew that she worshipped him, that she burned to do and to bear something for his sake, to prove how she could love him.

Mr. Bell looked at Sylvia in a puzzled way, as if there were something about her that he was noticing for the first time, something that called to him, in reply to which something stirred in himself, but to which he did not know how to respond.

"I am glad that you are not hurt, my child," he said. "You are certainly badly torn. Is it safe for you to do this sort of thing? To be sure nothing ever does happen here that threatens

danger, or at least I never hear of such things. But then it might very well happen that I should not hear of it. I hope that you do not go to play alone in unsafe places, my dear."

"Oh, I don't, I don't!" cried Sylvia so rapturously, that the note in her voice penetrated even her father's preoccupied mind. He looked at her for the third time, and with an awakening gaze.

"Father, dearest, I'll never go outside the yard if it troubles you! I'll give up all my tramps, I won't row, nor sail, nor do anything like that, if you mind it! I wouldn't worry you, when you're doing your great work for the world, not for anything! I wouldn't mind giving up things, if you cared—wanted me to. Truly, I am safe always, but if it frightens you about me I'll sit right here—and darn! I'd like to! It's—it's so nice to have you say that! I'd love, love to do anything you asked me to do, I'd so love, *love* your asking!"

Poor Sylvia poured out her words so fast that they tripped over one another. She rolled one hand over the other as she spoke, her slender body trembled, her voice had a quaver in it that she bravely tried to steady.

"Why, my dear," said her father gently,

with a sort of perception that his little girl was perturbed, "I do not want you to stay in the yard to play alone, certainly not; why should I? You are a good child to be so willing to obey me if I were unreasonable; a very good child, but I hope that I am not unreasonable. As long as you are safe I am quite satisfied to have you happy in your own way. I assume that Cassandra Billings knows your goings-out and comings-in? It seems to me that your clothing is somewhat unsuitable, my dear. I should prefer you to have whatever is customary for a little girl of your age and position to have. Is it time for your aunt, my sister Emily, to visit us again? I think she looks after these things?"

"She doesn't come in June, father; she was here in May. I have plenty of clothes, father dear. This dress was all right when I went out this morning. The brambles tore it when they weren't tearing me—or O'Malley," said Sylvia, feeling rebuffed, though she was glad to find her father noting her torn clothing.

Her heart had swelled with her desire to sacrifice for this great father, to prove her devotion to him, it had stirred her to her depths to express something of this feeling, for the first time

in her life, so that she caught her breath as if cold water had been thrown over her, when her father refused her proffered martyrdom and answered her with pleasant indifference.

Yet how could he guess the pent-up feeling that Sylvia cherished for him, how could he know how she longed for his love and to pour out her own love upon him?

"I think you are growing very fast, Sylvia," Mr. Bell said, however, groping for a clue to the feeling that Sylvia awoke in him to-day, a feeling that he had not noticed before in himself toward her.

"Yes, father," said Sylvia meekly. "I'm dreadfully tall, I know. But I am fifteen. I don't think I shall grow much more; I hope not. I am five feet six."

"Is it possible?" said Mr. Bell politely. "I am tall, nearly six feet. The Bells are tall as a family. Are you fifteen, my dear? Time flies. But that is still a child. You are a good child, my dear, I repeat, to be so ready to obey me if I were inclined to curtail your freedom. But I am not. I suspect that it has a great deal to do with your health. I do not recall your having had any serious illness. Are you going into the house? Then good-bye till tea time, my dear."

I am on my way to resume my work in what may be properly called my own house."

He bowed to Sylvia with a pleasant smile, and with the ceremonious politeness that characterised him

Sylvia went on her way slowly, with hanging head, a few tears which she could not keep back ran down to moisten her feverish cheek; it smarted now, and so did her arms and hands. She suffered from the reaction of her delight in her father's interest in her.

"But I'm not sensible; he did care when he thought something was wrong, but there isn't anything wrong, and he knows it. I can't expect such a great father to be interested in a snip of a girl every minute," she thought, scolding herself back into her usual happy philosophy. But there was heaviness in her heart, a wistfulness that her own lecturing of herself could not quite remove.

CHAPTER VI

TURN ABOUT

Cassandra Billings came into Sylvia's chamber in the morning while she was still asleep and stood looking down upon her, dreading to waken her, although she had come upon that errand.

Sylvia looked like a little girl and an exceedingly pretty little girl, as she lay with her dark hair spread out over the pillow, her face slightly tipped upward, her dark lashes resting on her sun-browned cheek, her lips parted in a half smile.

"I do hate to wake anything up that's sleepin' real good," thought Cassandra. She glanced around the room, deferring the moment when she should call Sylvia. It was an attractive room, but as unexpected as its young mistress was in its developments. The furniture was splendid old mahogany which had come to Sylvia because of her name; it had belonged to her grandmother, Sylvia Giddings. Bookshelves, built along one side of the wall, low and long, were filled with Sylvia's hard-used childish

books and volumes of her subsequent choosing. These latter were spotless and firm, for Sylvia treated her books reverently, but those volumes which had been her comrades by day, and under her pillow by night from her fifth year throughout her growing days, were sprung in their backs, chafed on their corners, often spotted, always faded, on their sides.

On the bookshelves stood incongruous ornaments, a china cat with broken ear-tips which Sylvia had loved and carried about when she was a wee creature, a jar of wonderful blue pottery, of considerable value, to buy which Sylvia had sacrificed many indulgences in the past year. The pictures on the walls carried on similar pages of autobiography; there were some "story-telling" pictures, and two or three etchings and reproductions which, like the blue jar, announced that Sylvia's untrained instincts made her appreciate true beauty. Fishing poles hung across hooks on the wall opposite to the bookshelves, a window box was filled with ferns growing so riotously that they announced their devoted tending; a baseball bat, a tennis racquet, a riding stock, and a pair of dumbbells in one corner, were offset by dainty toilette accessories on the dresser.

Altogether the spacious chamber, now flooded with sunrise light, was a museum of boy-and-girl tastes, or rather of the artist and sportsman's tastes, which justly reflected the compound creature that was Sylvia Bell.

Cassandra turned from seeing this, half taking in what it stood for, and bent her attention to what she had come to do.

"Miss Sylvia! Miss Sylvia, wake up, child! It's time, anyway, and this mornin' it's past time," she said.

Sylvia threw an arm over her face, as if to ward off the onslaught of duty. She murmured something inarticulate and burrowed her face into the pillow.

"No, no!" Cassandra remonstrated, "don't you turn over to keep on sleepin', either! You must wake up. It's come."

"What has come?" asked Sylvia, half rising on one elbow, instantly wide awake at this dramatic announcement.

"The hour of trial," replied Cassandra, like the Delphic oracle.

"Goodness me, Casabianca—Cassie, I mean!—what's that? What trial?" cried Sylvia, half startled, half amused.

"Susie's sick. I've sent her home to her

mother to be taken care of, for I knew it couldn't be done here, with me away. I had the milkman take her; he goes right by, and his cart don't jounce much; I noticed it yesterday on purpose, foreseein' this. And my sister-in-law's pretty bad; she's goin' to try a new doctor, the other don't help her a mite, and I've got to be there to-day. To-morrow her own sister's comin', from where she lives in Pennsylvania somewheres. So get right up, Miss Sylvia, and show what you're made of. You've got to get three meals to-day, and your father needs good feedin'. I've tried to make it's easy as I can, but my land, I don't know how 'twill come out! How soon can you be down? I want to show you a few points, and my brother-in-law's comin' after me on his way back from fetchin' the new doctor, liable to be here most any time." Cassandra drew an inward breath at the end of this long speech, and waited.

"I'll be down in ten minutes; I won't have to primp for housework," said Sylvia, swinging her feet to the floor and standing erect as she spoke.

"All right, hurry your best," said Cassandra, relieved that Sylvia had started. She went down the stairs ponderously. Sylvia paused and

wasted a minute, holding her second stocking in her hand, as she listened to Cassandra, singing as she went: "Ye Christian heroes, go proclaim."

"I wonder why it has to be a missionary hymn," thought Sylvia. "I suppose because the tune is so awfully solemn."

Sylvia was as good as her word, perhaps a half minute better. She found Cassandra in the kitchen with a slate in her hand.

"I've filled the tea kettle fresh," she said instantly when Sylvia appeared in the doorway, "so you no need do that. And there's enough coal in to last you till night, when I'll be back. The ice isn't in, but when the man comes you show him, and he'll set it in for you. Look out for a bowl of cream I put in the ice part of the refrigerator; don't forget to take it out first. On the slate's the list of what you must order when Dickson's man comes. And tell him that rice he sent was not first grade; I put it over there on the closet; you give it to him to take back and tell him to bring the best kind. And I'm sure I hope the plumber won't come, since he hasn't so far, and far enough, too! A week since I sent for him! But if he should come, there's hot water washers needed here and in the bathroom. And the leak I told him to

come for particular, is under here, in that laundry pipe. Don't forget; the one that runs down to the washtubs. I ordered steak for dinner, as easiest. You let your fire burn off clear before you begin to broil, and then put your steak on the broiler and hold it just so far above the coals, so it won't scorch, yet'll get the heat good. And keep it turnin'. You can take it off and try it; that doesn't hurt. Don't get it done so early it has to stand after it's done. Some tomatoes are in the cellar, but they ain't peeled. Your father hates 'em with the skin on. They make a relish with steak. Lettuce will taste good to-day; it's goin' to be hot. Pick it in good time and put it in cold water, wash it well and lay it in the colander to drain before you use it. You mix up one tablespoonful of oil to two of vinegar, salt and pepper to taste, for French dressin'. Your father doesn't like potatoes except they're mashed, so you'd better mash 'em. Boil 'em till they're done, then take the potato masher and mash 'em. Beat 'em up light and beat the seasonings into 'em, plenty butter, a little cream, salt and pepper. For dessert there's strawberries on the ice. Skim that bowl of cream that's in the ice part of the refrigerator, not the other one: that's this

mornin's milk. Now don't forget that! And there's cake in the box. Maybe your father'll want coffee, and maybe he won't. You'd better have the tea kettle boilin', then, if he should want it, all you've got to do is to put three tablespoonfuls coffee into the top of the coffee pot, and pour the boilin' water over it, and set it on to boil up through the percolator a few minutes. I ground some; it's in the mill now. And you've got to set your father's room straight after you've made his bed and your own. You can use the carpet sweeper for dinin' room crumbs, after you've cleared away; that'll answer for once. And for supper—"

But Sylvia uttered a cry of protest.

"Cassandra Billings, I can't hear, let alone understand, one word more! How do you think one poor head can hold all you've said about dinner? And now you're beginning on supper! For pity's sake, *don't!* You'd better trust to luck, and let me do the best I can, than to make me crazy, and then set me loose in the kitchen! Talk about cramming for examinations at school! Why, this is awful! I'll get along, Cass; don't worry. Father and I can't die of starvation in one day, that's some comfort, even if I don't get along. I imagine they sort

of come to a person, the things you've seen done all your life, without knowing you were paying attention to them."

"Well, that does sound kind of sensible, Miss Sylvia," said Cassandra, relief in her voice. "Then I'll get my duds on, and go out to watch for my brother-in— Land o' Goshen! There he is now!"

Cassandra hastily put on her black shade hat and a gray coat, seized her bag, and went rapidly out of the side door.

"Good-bye, child," she said as she went, throwing a backward glance in Sylvia's direction. "Good luck to you. Take care you don't burn yourself against anything, and of all things be sure you keep the tea kettle nose turned back; there's nothin' worse'n steam, and no surer way of gettin' burned by it, than a tea kettle nose. Good-bye."

Sylvia had a sense of desolation as Cassandra's brother-in-law started up his old white horse and his carriage creaked away, bearing Cassandra. But she shook it off, much as she shook off the foam that often dashed over her when she sailed, and she looked about to see what to do first

"Toast and eggs, I suppose," she said aloud.

She cut bread thin and even, for she was fastidious as to her toast. She went to the cellar and brought up four eggs.

"Boiling is simplest," she thought, hunting the kitchen closet for a saucepan. "I wonder when father will come, and how I'll know when to start these things?"

She wisely decided to wait till she heard her father's step before she put the eggs on to boil. But she made coffee, and not being sure what Cassandra had said about the quantity, put six tablespoonfuls into the pot, with an indefinite idea that "half a dozen spoonfuls sounded right." To this Sylvia added a pint of water, for this she knew was two cupfuls, and she did not drink coffee.

Mr. Bell came in from his laboratory just as Sylvia finished setting the table. She was nervous when she saw him coming, and the first thing that he said as he unfolded his napkin was:

"How do you happen to be doing this, my dear? And why should we not have silver on the table?"

"Susie is sick, sent away, father, and Cassandra has gone for the day to her sick sister-in-law, so there's no one but me. Isn't it dread-

ful that I never once saw I hadn't put on knives, nor spoons, nor forks?" sighed poor Sylvia.

"Not nearly as bad as if you had laid them, and forgotten the breakfast," her father said cheerfully. "I particularly want coffee this morning; I went to my work before four. My dear! My dear child! Sylvia!" Mr. Bell added, tasting his coffee, which he drank without cream or sugar. "Pray what can be the matter with this coffee? It tastes, it *is*, rank poison!"

"Oh, father! What shall I do? Is it strong?" stammered Sylvia.

"Pour out this cupful, give me a third of a cup of coffee, and fill the cup with water," said her father. "I do not remember ever tasting anything like it. What is the breakfast, my dear?"

"Oh, eggs!" cried Sylvia. "I put them on to boil when I came in here. Maybe they are too hard! But I've really good toast."

Sylvia remedied the coffee according to her father's instructions. She breathlessly watched him open the eggs, and was horrified to see them done to the full picnic standard of hardness.

"Oh, father! Let me boil two more! I'll stand right over them with the clock in my hand!" begged Sylvia tearfully.

Mr. Bell arose to the occasion. "Not at all, my dear; not at all!" he said. "I shall not object to hard boiled eggs for variety. The toast is excellent, better than usual. I should not expect a little girl of your age and inexperience to make no mistakes. Cassandra did very wrong to go away and leave you with such responsibility."

Sylvia's heart leaped joyously. With the greatest difficulty she refrained from hugging her father. What a darling he was to take her failures this way! Oh, what a darling he was, anyway! If only she dared show him how she worshipped him for thus sparing her!

But all she ventured to say was: "Thank you, father, dearest," in a meek little voice, and Mr. Bell went on taking his breakfast and making the best of it, unconscious of the tumult of love this aroused in Sylvia's fast throbbing, grateful heart. Mr. Bell out of the house, safely in his laboratory once more, Sylvia did not find the other duties which were fallen upon her hard to perform. Setting rooms in order came naturally to her; unsuspected by herself or any one else, there was in Sylvia an instinct for decoration that lent itself to making a room look its best.

Yet this took an amount of time that amazed her; it was eleven o'clock before she got through dusting and straightening the library, her own chamber and her father's. But it had not been done without drawbacks.

The iceman had come in the midst of it, Sylvia had forgotten the bowl of cream, of which Cassandra had warned her. It had been not merely tipped over when the iceman put in the ice, but the heavy mass had dropped on it and the bowl was in countless pieces. Many of them had fallen down the refrigerator pipe, wedging themselves into its narrow opening, and the cream had trickled everywhere, out on the cellar floor, down the refrigerator sides. There was now no cream for dinner, and there was hard, tiresome extra work to be done to repair the damage.

Then the procrastinating plumber had come on this late day, and Sylvia could not remember what Cassandra had said he was to do. While he put a washer on the kitchen faucet, poor Sylvia held O'Malley with one hand—O'Malley had taken a strong dislike to the plumber and wanted to vent it—while she held her head with the other, and at last decided that there was something wrong with the laundry tubs.

She had to wait while the man sought and did not find such trouble, not unnaturally, since it had never existed.

"Now, is it, or is it not, time to begin to get dinner?" thought Sylvia when this person had departed. "I suppose I'd better cut the lettuce. Oh, what shall I do for cream? I can't go after it. O'Malley, my dear, if only I could send you and you could ask for it! With a brogue or without; it wouldn't matter, dearest!"

Sylvia came in from the garden flushed and over-heated. The lettuce looked weary and the girl decidedly felt so. She dropped the salad into cold water and dashed more cold water over her burning face.

"I wish I knew!" she sighed later, surveying aghast the heaped panful of potatoes which she had brought from the cellar to peel, the steak, the unpeeled tomatoes, all menacingly before her.

"Yo-o-ho!" called a voice, and a whistle followed it.

"Ruth Hapgood! Lloyd! Is that you?" cried Sylvia out of the window.

Ruth and Lloyd came around from the front of the house. Sylvia ran to meet them.

"I do believe your—or my—guardian angel

sent you!" she cried, by way of salutation. "Don't you know about getting dinner, Ruth? It seems as if it would be just like you."

"Why, I don't know much," said Ruth, surprised. "But of course I know easy things—mother makes me do it—like steaks and chops, and simple things."

"Simple things!" groaned Sylvia. "Not to me! I'm alone to-day, and I've got to get dinner—steak, mashed potatoes, lettuce, tomatoes, strawberries, coffee—maybe. If you'll stay and show me how, we'll make it a picnic, and I'll bless you forever, and when I'm wealthy I'll have a statue of you put up on the dunes."

"Never mind," said Lloyd. "Ruth is too little to be a statue, and I'm too noble to allow one. Anything I can do, errand, or anything? Want anything from a store?"

"Do you mean that? Do you honestly, truly, mean that great, that gallant, that splendid offer, Lloyd?" demanded Sylvia.

"Sure, do I!" said Lloyd. "What's up?"

"Cream. Only it's down," said Sylvia. "I forgot to take it out of the refrigerator when the iceman came, and the bowl is pulverised, and the cream is down the pipe, and gone up the

spout—if you'll allow a tried lady to use slang! If you could get a pint from the dairy, or a quart, or a gallon—I've no idea what we'd need—I'd never, never forget your goodness, Lloyd Hapgood, rescuer of dames!"

"All right; I'm off. Quart, or pint, Ruth?" said Lloyd, turning to go as he spoke.

"Pint is plenty," said Ruth with an assurance that impressed Sylvia deeply.

"Is there an apron about, Sylvia? What are you going to do with those potatoes?"

"Peel them, boil them, mash them, eat them?" suggested Sylvia.

"Have you invited one of the shore boarding houses to lunch here?" asked Ruth. "You've got there three times more than you want! Let's peel some. Peel thin. Unless you like them better cooked in their jackets; do you?"

"Mercy me, I don't know!" cried Sylvia.

"Then let's cook them that way; they have better flavour, and it doesn't matter if they crumble when you peel them as long as you mean to mash them," said housewifely Ruth. "Put on a kettle of cold water. When they've boiled, we'll put some salt in the water and that's all there is to it. Do you like tomatoes scalded to peel, and then cooled?"

"Oh, Ruth, you make me feel like a whole asylum for the feeble-minded!" cried Sylvia. "I don't even know there's any difference; I never thought anything about peeling tomatoes!"

"Well, I don't like them scalded," said Ruth decidedly. "I'd rather fuss with them, and peel them as they are; they taste wilted the other way, mamma and I think. You might peel the tomatoes. Oh, Sylvia, would you mind calling up Aunt Helen and telling her we are staying here? She'll be frightened if we don't come home to lunch."

"Course I will! That's one thing I can do. You make me feel perfectly contemptible, Ruth," said Sylvia, hurrying to the telephone.

Sylvia found peeling tomatoes troublesome when she returned to her task.

"Show me, Ruth," she begged humbly. "I'm squeezing all the tomato out of this one! It won't be anything but a neatly peeled, thin-walled hollow when I'm done with it."

Ruth laughed and tried to show Sylvia how to hold the scarlet globe lightly. Ruth worked deftly, happily, nothing seemed hard to her. Sylvia worked awkwardly under her instructions, filled with admiration for the competent little creature.

"Turn about's fair play, Ruthie," she said. "I can sail, and I can row, and do all sorts of that kind of things, but I'd starve to death, and ruin a house in a week! Don't you think it's disgraceful? I'm awfully ashamed, honestly!"

"But I have a mother, Sylvia dear," said Ruth gently. "I know how, because she taught me. If you had had a mother, you'd have been with her, just as I've been with mine, and you'd have learned. You're no end cleverer than I am. I haven't read much, you've read everything, almost. And you're—I don't know—great, somehow! When you begin to learn these things you'll beat me all to small pieces."

"You speak as if you could rather like me, Ruth," said Sylvia softly. "Could you? I haven't ever had a real friend, a chum; do you think—" She paused.

"That I could love you!" cried Ruth, flushing. "I never would have thought of your caring about me, I'm so little and just like every one else! But as to liking you, Sylvia Bell, I think you're—you're glorious! I do love you now, and if you don't mind it, I'd love you more than I could say. Do you truly want me for a chiefest friend? But, oh, Sylvia, please don't

answer till you've thought! And don't take me just for one summer. I couldn't stand it to begin and stop, you know."

"Not my style," said Sylvia. "I never started chumming in all my life. I hate the way some girls keep jumping on and off friendships—like a trolley car! I do like you heaps, Ruth, and I do want you for a friend." She arose and went over to Ruth, bending above her as she sat hulling strawberries.

"I have lots of fun, and I always thought I didn't care about anything but to be free," she said softly. "But lately I get a little bit lonely, in spite of my blessed Charles O'Malley. It must be growing up—only I won't grow up for many a moon! It's dandy to be free, but it isn't so nice not to belong to any one. Of course there's father, but he is busy. I mean belonging close and cozy."

Little Ruth said a wise thing in reply. "You've got to love some one and they've got to love you; then it doesn't matter whether you're playing, or working, or well, or sick. It's there, underneath, all the time. That's the way mamma and I are."

Sylvia sighed. "That's the way I supposed it was, Ruth," she said. "Well, take me in, will you?"

Ruth raised her pretty face and kissed Sylvia, who kissed her heartily in return.

Lloyd came in at that moment.

"Great Scot! Thought you were getting dinner!" he said. "If that isn't just like girls! Leave 'em alone a minute and they go to kissing each other! It's getting boiling hot outside; hope your cream isn't sour."

"Not a bit," declared Sylvia, investigating. "I'm no end grateful, Lloyd. And Ruth is going to teach me to be some good on land. Turn and turn about; I'll show you and her a few things about sailing, fishing and swimming."

"I'm going to stay here all the afternoon and help Sylvia with getting supper," announced Ruth happily. "I'm glad I can. She's always made me feel so tiny and silly!"

Lloyd smiled approval on his small cousin.

"I'm going to stay, too," he said. "I can fry potats till you'd weep for joy, and I can make coffee, make anything—a mess, if I want to. Hey, Tinker Bell?"

"Stay, do," Sylvia urged. "I'm having a scrumptious time. No wonder you two are named Hapgood!"

CHAPTER VII

"AND THEY CHEERILY PUT TO SEA"

"Of course you do know that you've never once been to see me," Ruth said when she and Lloyd left Sylvia that night.

"I know it," Sylvia admitted. "Is that bad? I suppose it is. But it doesn't mean anything bad, not that I don't want to see you. I'd a lot rather you'd come here."

"I think Aunt Helen would rather have you come sometimes, Sylvia. She's particular about things like that," Ruth said.

"Yes, you ought to do the polite, Tinker Bell," Lloyd corroborated Ruth. "Why not suffer for the right?"

"Oh fiddle-dee-dee! Suffer!" Sylvia laughed. "All right; I'll be there to-morrow. Then the next day I've got to go sailing. That will be two days ashore and that's two too many. How about you? Do you think you can sail, well, right side up, so to speak? I'd like to have you for passengers, but I hate to have you as martyrs. I suppose it would depend on the

sort of wind we had whether you'd be brought home with your shield, or on it."

"What's that?" Lloyd demanded impatiently. "Book talk? I'd get on if I didn't eat a whole delicatessen shopful of messes. Are you game to try it again, Ruth?"

"Ye-es," agreed Ruth dubiously. "Of course I mean to get used to sailing. But it will always seem as though it was better to go some other time, I'm afraid. I'll go, yes."

"You're a good little sport, in your quiet way, Ruthie," Sylvia heartily approved her. "It takes more courage to do a thing you don't like, what's more, that is hard on you, than it does to be daring, like me. Because I'd have to be strapped down to be kept out of it; you have to be held up, instead of strapped down."

"I'm afraid Shetland floss would be strong enough for my straps," laughed Ruth. "But I do mean to like the water. We'll look for you to-morrow. Will you come to tea?"

"Yes, thank you," said Sylvia with unexpected docility. The truth was that she felt that it would not do to leave to Ruth all the glory of self-conquest.

Cassandra came home that night much easier in mind as to her brother's family. The newly

arrived sister of his sick wife proved to be competent, even when measured by Cassandra's exacting standard, so Cassandra came away feeling that she could perfectly well be spared.

Then Susie sent word that she should be able to resume her duties within two days; altogether the signals were set for fair weather in the Bell household.

But!—Sylvia thought of it as a capitalised, underscored "but!"—Cassandra brought with her a letter that had arrived in the last mail, and this letter was from Sylvia's Aunt Emily, Miss Emily Bell, and it announced her coming to see her niece, and to see about her niece, within ten days.

Aunt Emily meant well. Every one knows just what that stands for. When a person has to be explained by a charitable emphasis upon her intentions, then it is perfectly clear that her performances are wearisome. Sylvia knew that for her, at least, Miss Bell's visit was a period to be endured as best she could, chiefly by as many escapes from her aunt's presence as might be accomplished.

Sylvia went to tea at Mrs. Leveritt's with perfect decorum. She wore her prettiest gown, and behaved in her prettiest manner. When

Sylvia chose to subdue herself no young girl could be more conventionally charming. Mrs. Leveritt watched her with growing wonder and approbation. She had an old-fashioned respect for her elders, a sweet frankness that was free from self-consciousness, and at times her breezy fun broke through the half-shyness in a way that Mrs. Leveritt found irresistible.

After Sylvia had gone, with Lloyd to see her safely home through the gathering summer dusk, Mrs. Leveritt delighted Ruth with her praise of her friend.

"I'm sure I don't know what people mean by calling Sylvia Bell a tomboy," she said. "She's not only a sweet girlish girl, she's an old-fashioned little gentlewoman. I suppose she has come by that charm of hers through growing up alone, influenced by that fine Bell library, and—well, Ruth, my dear, I'm afraid I want to say by her freedom from intimacy with girls of her age! But of course that would be unfair. Still, my dear, the modern girl is notably lacking in respect toward her elders, and Sylvia, in spite of her free life, is most courteous and respectful. Yet how she does bubble over with fun, and how her eyes do call one to join in with her and be a girl, too! She's a dear child, Ruth; I'm glad

you've become friends. Although I'd never admit that our little girl was not as sweet as any girl need be!"

Ruth hugged her aunt. "My mother and my mother's sister set me an example," she said, and meant it.

The next morning the other Sylvia, the boyish Sylvia, set out early to sail. Once more she wore her middy costume and her weather-worn old hat, and was as glad to be dressed thus as O'Malley was to see her wear these things. Both knew that this foretold *The Walloping Window Blind* and the pleasure they loved most.

Sylvia had returned to her harmonica. She had practised at odd moments, and now began to feel like a professional artist on this humble instrument.

She had done more than conquer it; she had composed upon it! The little tumble-down house in the thicket, upon which she had unexpectedly fallen in her explorations, remained prominent in her imagination. She found herself recurring to it, building up around it all sorts of stories, wondering what could have been its history, whether any one but her knew that it was there, as much of it as had survived.

So when a simple little air came into her head, or rather when she stumbled upon it in her experiments on the various holes in the harmonica, Sylvia played it over, added to it, till it became something like a tune, and she called it "The Rune of the Ruined House," and was immensely proud and fond of it.

If truth is to be spoken in this connection, however, it was easier for Sylvia to make up her own original tunes on the harmonica than to find those already composed by better known musicians.

As she came piping down the beach, she espied Gabriel Gaby sunning himself in front of the small shack which was his solitary dwelling place, stretched out upon the sand. His house was built under the over-hanging shelter of the dune; it consisted of two rooms roofed by a lean-to. Outside it several poles were planted as a kind of supplementary cupboard; upon them hung Gabriel's pots and pans, milk can and frying pan, saving labour by sun-drying.

Gabriel's cat, his housemate and intimate crony, sat upon his chest at this moment, also getting dried, partly by the sun, partly by her own pink tongue. O'Malley had been taught the whole duty of a dog toward this cat; he never

chased her. But though principle had, in this case, triumphed over nature, nature cried out over its unnatural suppression. O'Malley advanced to the accompaniment of whines which he never could repress when he saw a cat whom he might not chase.

"Why don't we ask Gabriel Gaby to go with us, O'Malley?" Sylvia asked, her hand comfortingly upon O'Malley's head. "Don't take it so hard, dear dragoon! It's a hard thing, but try to forget that cats can run. If we took Gabriel with us, O'Malley, I could play the harmonica while he sailed the boat—though that would be another hard thing for you, I suppose! But I do want to find out on the sly whether he knows anything about our house, my dear.

"Hallo, Gabriel Gaby," Sylvia called. "Why are you down and out? Because you know you are both out and down, Gabriel."

"Hallo, Sylvie," Gabriel cried, rising into a sitting position. "I was merely meditatin' after I got my mornin' chores done up. There's a heap to meditate on, out here, if you're given to it. A man like me don't never get used to the boundlessness of the beyond-bounds, so to speak. Besides, I had a kinder off-day yes'day, felt all ways and no ways, if you understand."

"Well, it isn't quite clear, Gabriel, but I think I get it," said Sylvia. "So did I feel several ways the day before yesterday, but it wasn't because I had an off-day; it was because I had an on-day, an on-duty-day. I was thinking of you, Gabriel; I had to do housework, and I didn't know how. Ruth Hapgood rescued me. I was wondering how you managed to cook and live all by yourself. Men aren't supposed to do those things."

"Imagination, Sylvie! Fables!" said Gabriel Gaby, energetically getting on his feet. "No sense in it. If women is equal, as they keep sayin' they are nowadays, and, as far 's I can see, makin' good their claim, then it works both ways; then men're equal, too. I've heard my old captain say—he was a great scholar, for a man that wasn't educated—he said two things equal was equal to each other, or something like that. So men're equal to women. I can do housework, 'f I do say it, just 's well 's my sister could of, if she'd ever been born, which she wasn't, for five male Gabys was in my fam'ly, an' not a girl to break the procession when my mother sent us off to Sunday school. No reason why I couldn't, for'n instance, why I couldn't knead up bread, 'f you can sail a boat.

An' you can, an' I can, do both them things respectfully."

"Respectively?" said Sylvia involuntarily. Then hastily added, to cover the correction: "But it seems as though you ought to have a wife and a nice home, Gabriel."

"Sylvie," said Gabriel earnestly, "I've got the nice home. That shack is exactly what I want, an' few human bein's can say that of their house, mansion or hovel. An' as to the wife, Sylvie, that can't be. I had a disappointment in love when I was foolisher than I'm now—I hope—an' that settled it."

"Oh, Gabriel," cried Sylvia, instantly dropping down on the sand, forgetting all else in her girlish interest in a romance. "You never told me this before! Was that why you never married?"

"No, 'twan't," said Gabriel, with a twinkle in his childlike blue eyes, "that's the way I got my disappointment, Sylvie; I did marry! She had what I should say, at this distance of time, still should say, was the worst temper any woman ever had. She didn't like my sorter easy-goin' ways, an' I didn't like her uneasy-goin' ways, so here I be! I gave her what I had saved, an' come off. She'd ruther, an' I'd a

heap ruther. Mate'n I get on fine; I wouldn't change places with a king, though they seem to be more'n ordinary changeable, as to places, kings nowadays. Fact is I am a king. Mebbe that's why Matey likes to look at me, hey, Mate?"

The cat rubbed her head against Gabriel's knee when she heard her name, and the plump little old sailor stooped to caress her.

"Dear me," said Sylvia, at a loss how to take this confidence, and disappointed of her romance. "Well, Gabriel Gaby, you are a funny little sailor-man, but you're a nice one. I like you. Don't you want to come with us out in the boat this morning? I'm going to take the Hapgoods sailing. I thought we'd keep along shore; I'm not sure of what they might do. It's smooth this morning, but it's smoothest close inshore, of course."

"I shouldn't think any one could feel the worse for this kind of water," said Gabriel Gaby. "But people're queer, everyways, brains, an' hearts, an' souls, an' I shouldn't wonder if stomachs, too. Yes, I'd just as lieves go along; I'm not, so to say, rushin' busy." Once more Gabriel twinkled at Sylvia.

"Come along then," cried Sylvia, jumping up.

"The Hapgoods are probably waiting. I told them to wait for me by my tender."

"Good-bye, Mate," said Gabriel, stroking his cat again. "Stay right here, an' don't let the rats carry off our mansion. I'll see to it that you have fish for your lunch, my lady, an' don't get lonely while I'm gone."

Mate seemed to understand, at least she responded warmly to Gabriel's caress, and immediately sat down before the door of the shack, when he moved away, her tail wrapped around her feet, one end vigilantly moving, her whole attitude expressive of responsibility and adjustment to a long wait.

Ruth and Lloyd were waiting for Sylvia. Lloyd and Gabriel ran the rowboat down the beach, and Lloyd turned to Sylvia after she was launched, saying: "You may as well be a passenger this morning; I do know how to row, and if two gentlemen are invited by you they ought to do the hard work."

"Here, here!" Gabriel Gaby approved him. "Sylvia's got a right to loaf this time." So Sylvia and Ruth sat together in the stern, and Lloyd and Gabriel rowed out to *The Walloping Window Blind's* moorings.

"Wouldn't dare hint at sailin' her, would I?" suggested Gabriel Gaby.

"Not yet; by and by I'm going to let you take her, while I show you how beautifully I now play the harmonica! I'm afraid O'Malley will jump overboard, but if we keep inshore he won't drown. Shall we go up the coast first? It's shoal water, and Ruth won't feel any motion," suggested Sylvia, a design behind her consideration for Ruth.

The sail along the pretty, curved shore was especially delightful that morning when the breeze blew softly off land, with the fragrance of growing things upon its breath.

Sylvia was not inclined to talk, but Gabriel Gaby made it unnecessary. He was an inveterate talker and was always delighted to get a new audience for the tales of his voyages, begun when a sailor was a sailor, not a stoker, an engineer, or mechanic of some sort. Gabriel Gaby was so rosy, plump and cherubic that he produced the effect of a boy who had done some trick to make lines on his face simulating age, but he must have been far from youthful. He had shipped when a mere lad, and had known the sea while sailing vessels still voyaged upon it. He was as full of exciting, funny yarns as a

pin cushion is full of sawdust, and told them with great gusto whenever chance offered.

Lloyd listened to Gabriel with open admiration, Ruth found him less entrancing, but yet could not escape his thrall. Gabriel was in high feather; he had not had a new audience in many a day, never a more attentive one.

Sylvia was released from a hostess' obligations. She gave her whole mind to her boat, as she liked to do, leaning back leisurely, for the wind was light and her task light, also, in consequence. Occasionally she threw in a question, or a comment to bring out some well-known point which Gabriel was in danger of forgetting; she knew every one of his stories by heart, having been his admiring follower from her babyhood. But for most of the time she sat with her eyes looking dreamily out over the bay, thinking long thoughts, as a girl will, silent and perfectly content.

After a time Sylvia aroused. She drew in her feet, which she had stretched out lazily, in her favourite attitude, straightened her shoulders, and her eyes grew keen and alert. The boat had crept up the shore till she had come so far as to be nearly opposite the cove which Sylvia had discovered at the foot of the overgrown

path that led down from the old house among the brambles.

Gabriel Gaby was at that moment at pause between his two choicest stories; he was allowing time for Lloyd to have out the laugh with which the climax of the first of these stories was always applauded.

"Is that a cove, Gabriel, in there?" Sylvia asked with studied carelessness.

"Yes, 'tis," Gabriel said, looking in the direction in which she pointed.

"Now, if you think that's funny, Lloyd, just harken to this one," he went on.

"I don't think that looks quite like other inlets, Gabriel," Sylvia ventured, not wanting to seem curious, nor to arouse Gabriel's interest unduly; she had a strong desire to keep her little old house a secret, for which reason she wanted to find out if it were actually a secret, known to her alone. "Does it run in far? Do you know anything about it? I never rowed in there, I'm sure."

"No reason why you should, 's far 's I know," Gabriel Gaby said, not pleased by the interruption of his entertainment. "Certain I've been there. It runs in 's far 's an inlet can, far 's the mainland. Nothin' peculiar 'bout it now.

I've dug seaweed, the kind they use makin' some drug or other, 'round the rock in there. There's a big rock around the cove, out o' sight 's you sail past. They do say smugglers used that place once, but that wa'n't in my time. Nothin' to see there now. Well, that time I started to tell you 'bout, Lloyd and Ruth, was when I was off the coast of Africa, comin' home from a voyage to Spain. There was a coon boy on the ship, blessed if I ever could see what business he had on it, or what you'd call his duties, but he was more fun than a cage of monkeys, an' he was fully 's good for us as the best officer afloat; sailors can stand entertainin'."

Gabriel was off on his second favourite yarn. Sylvia knew that there was no use in trying to get anything more out of him in regard to that inlet which so interested her, more, not less than before, since she had heard Gabriel's careless allusion to possible smugglers who had used it in days gone by.

She let herself go off delightfully into the visions which this hint called up. Perhaps the old house had been their lair! Perhaps its falling walls had once echoed to a blood-curdling chorus, like that deliciously horrible one in Treasure Island! Sylvia resolved to go again

to visit it. She would hunt up old people and slyly get them to tell her ancient stories of the neighbourhood. Perhaps thus she would indirectly learn what she wanted to know. For the more she thought of this old house, the more she felt that she wanted to hide it away from intruders, hide it in her knowledge, as nature was hiding it from bodily intrusion, in an almost impenetrable thicket. Sylvia's father was right, to a degree, in considering her still a child.

"I'm coming about, crew," Sylvia said at last. "Going down the coast; 'ware boom!"

She jammed her tiller down hard, the boat hesitated, then swung around, the sail flapped an instant, then the boom swung across the standing room, and they were headed back in the direction in which they had come.

"Shall I stand over to that island?" Sylvia asked. "It's a pretty little thing; we might go around it, if you like."

"Aye, aye, sir; whatever you say goes," answered Lloyd.

"Feel well, both of you?" Sylvia asked.

"Right as a trivet. Don't seem to have brought along the part of us that doesn't like sailing," returned Lloyd.

"Good!" exclaimed Sylvia. "Will you take her, Gabriel? I want to play."

"Want to see if we're strong enough to stand the mouth organ, too?" suggested Lloyd.

Sylvia laughed, but made no other reply. She resigned her place, her tiller and sheet to Gabriel Gaby, produced her harmonica from her pocket, wiped it on her sleeve in quite a boyish manner, and began to perform.

O'Malley howled. When he found that howling did not check his mistress, he came aft and sat down on her feet, putting his fore paws on her knees and looking up into her face with prayerful eyes.

"He hopes that he can put on the soft pedal, Tink," said Lloyd. "He's sitting on your feet."

Sylvia nodded, but did not pause in her playing for other answer. She managed to caress O'Malley with her knee, but this did not assuage his feelings.

"How's that?" she demanded, breathless, but triumphant, as she ended her tune.

"Pretty good, Sylvia, real good 's I may say," Gabriel answered heartily, feeling that, as her teacher, it was his duty to reply. "But what under the canopy's that toon? I d' know 's I ever heard it."

"You never did; I made it up," answered Sylvia. "Wait till I play 'River Shannon.' I learned that to please Charles O'Malley—but it doesn't!"

She fell to piping again. The little boat was rounding the small island; it was one of the many pretty little spots of earth which dotted the bay. This one was wooded on three sides, but on its eastern side it had a bare and rocky little beach.

As *The Walloping Window Blind* came around it, there on this sand stood two figures. They were digging, coats off, their loose shirts open at the throat, their whole effect, at least to Sylvia's quick imagination, eloquent of mystery. And one was Mr. Clement Bell, the other his factotum, Eben Tompkins.

Sylvia's harmonica dropped on O'Malley's head; he yelped, not hurt, but nervous, and considering this insult added to injury.

Mr. Bell glanced up, looked at the boat, recognising her, yet not realising her. Eben also looked up and seemed to say something to his employer, for Mr. Bell saluted with one hand, vaguely. Even from that distance one could see that he was far too interested in his singular employment to be alive to anything else.

"For pity's sake, that's your father! Dig-

ging! 'Way out here!" cried Ruth jumping up to see better.

Sylvia flushed to her hair. She could not have said why, but this discovery of theirs made her miserably uncomfortable.

"I wonder why they are digging? It would be nice if father began to care about fishing." She tried to speak carelessly.

"You know they ain't clam beds there, Sylvie," Gabriel Gaby said. "Still less mud worms, which you don't use perch fishin', nor yet bluefish trollin', nor for mack'rel. He's out this way a lot, different places. I often see 'm, earlier 'n this, most al'ays. I expect it's got somethin' to do with that secret work o' his. Eben Tompkins beats all get out, won't tell one thing about it. Folks all say he likes to make himself important 'bout it."

"It is work that is of benefit to all the world," said Sylvia, throwing back her head like a spirited horse, the more proudly that there was within her a shocked sense of pain, as if something that she could not define were going wrong.

"You can't expect that to be talked about. People wouldn't understand. I am very glad that Eben Tompkins is so careful."

The little boat had passed the island, beating down on its other side, and ran on fast, in a light, quickening breeze, toward home.

Gabriel Gaby continued to sail her. Sylvia sat silently caressing O'Malley, who did not return to his post on deck, apparently feeling that his close presence prevented Sylvia from making those sounds which tortured him.

Still very quiet and preoccupied, Sylvia let Gabriel make her moorings, furl the sail and row them all ashore.

As she stepped out of the rowboat on the beach, Sylvia aroused and threw off her abstraction.

“‘She was stubby and square, but we didn’t much care,
And we cheerily put to sea;
And we left the crew of the junk to chew
The bark of the rubgub tree,’”

she sang at the top of a voice of considerable volume.

“That’s the poem about *The Walloping Window Blind*, in ‘Davy and the Goblin.’ It’s perfectly beautiful! Good-bye, Hapgoods, both. Glad you’re feeling able to sit up.”

With which farewell Sylvia ran down the beach, with O'Malley racing just ahead of her; sober thoughts never made her walk soberly.

CHAPTER VIII

PRUNES AND PRISMS

"Oh, me, is to-day the day?" thought Sylvia, looking out upon the dawn from her eastern window, remembering that Aunt Emily would come before this sun set.

It was such a pink and gold sunrise, the air was so deliciously soft and fragrant, the freshly awakened earth so fair, that Sylvia felt it made the case a little worse. It seemed particularly hard that anything discordant should be about to intrude upon such beauty.

"I'll work in the garden before breakfast, since I'm awake so early," she said to herself.

Sylvia was a good gardener. Though she was uncertain, fitful, in regard to other work, her garden was never neglected. The flowers at the Bell house were the admiration of every one, and their luxuriant bloom was due chiefly to Sylvia's faithful care of them.

In a skirt and smock, bare head, and forgetting her gloves, Sylvia took her hoe and rake and sallied forth.

O'Malley welcomed her rapturously; she lost a quarter of an hour giving him cause to rejoice in her coming. Then she stiffened her resolution, and, also, straightened her back.

"Time's up, O'Malley, dear; I've fooled too long. Now we dig, at least one of us does. See that you sit on the bed borders; don't you put paw over the line!" Sylvia counselled O'Malley, who received his instructions soberly.

Sylvia began to hoe energetically. Already the mounting sun was heating the air, the first dewy coolness of sunrise was lost.

O'Malley sat obediently on the bed border, but occasionally he hitched the least bit nearer; he did so much want to be precisely on the same spot that his mistress occupied! And then, without warning, when everything seemed to be going well, O'Malley growled, a deep throaty growl, fraught with earnest meaning.

Sylvia looked up. Over against the fence on the side street boundary of the Bell place leaned a man, watching her from afar.

When she raised her head, the man raised his hat. Sylvia bowed slightly, annoyed, she did not know why.

He waited and leaned forward, Sylvia reluc-

tantly crossed over to receive the question which he seemed to want to ask.

"Good morning," the stranger said pleasantly, looking at Sylvia sharply.

"Good morning," replied the girl, her hand on O'Malley, who still growled in his throat.

"Do you take boarders here?" asked the man. "I am in search of a boarding place, not one of the crowded summer hotels farther on, but a quiet, private place. One was suggested to me; is this it?"

"No, for we don't take boarders," Sylvia answered.

She looked at the man keenly. He had a face that one would remember, though it was of the type of the average business man. His brows were strongly marked, level, slightly drawn together over the nose. His eyes were uncomfortably penetrating, and his chin looked as squarely determined as any rock along the coast. Sylvia decided on the spot that it was his eyes and his chin that made this man's face so definite.

"I see. Sorry to have troubled you. You don't happen to know the place to which I was directed?" the stranger persisted.

Sylvia shook her head. "Nowhere along

here; these are all private houses. The boarding houses are farther back in the village, or farther up the beach," she said.

"Thank you. Once more I apologise for interrupting you. Is this Mr. Dinsmore's place?" asked the man with a comprehensive glance around that seemed to take in everything.

"No, it isn't. Mr. Dinsmore lives on another street," said Sylvia crisply, and turned away.

The man put on the hat, which he had politely held in his hand while Sylvia talked with him, and went his way. Sylvia resumed her hoeing, but with none of her first energy.

This man vaguely annoyed and troubled her. He was not of the type of her fellow townsmen, nor was he like the usual summer visitor to their lovely shore.

It was early in the morning for a person to be abroad seeking board. Sylvia did not believe that any one could have directed him to a boarding place which might by any possibility resemble the fine old Bell place; she knew of none of that sort.

Therefore why had this stranger pretended to mistake the Bell house for the house of which he was in search?

"Well, I'm growling at him, too; I don't

blame you one bit, O'Malley," Sylvia said aloud, as a retrospective growl muttered in the dog's throat. "But I've got to hoe if I want to get anything done this morning."

She fell on her task more vigorously, and worked well for another quarter of an hour, when O'Malley growled again, then barked, several sharp, excited barks, and whined. Sylvia looked up.

Coming down the grass, having evidently entered by the front gate and come around, was a tall lady. She was dressed in a most correctly plain tailored suit of some dark, light-weight cloth; her hat was close and tight veiled. She wore grey gloves, irreproachably well-fitting and spotless; her coat opened at the neck in a trim little V, and the collar of her silvery silk blouse below it fitted and met in a faultless line, held together by an amethyst, framed in an oval of old English gold. She was decidedly tall, thin and straight. There was considerable reason in what Sylvia had once said of this lady, that "no one ever could be as neat and nice as she looked."

"Why, Aunt Emily! Where did you come from?" cried Sylvia, dropping her hoe with a gesture that she managed to make impulsive

and suggestive of joy, but coming toward the arrival with lingering feet.

"I arrived late last night, so stayed at the inn. I am an early riser, you know," returned Miss Bell.

She surveyed Sylvia, flushed, heated, dishevelled, bare-headed, with extreme disapproval. There was no mistaking a slight hesitation before she took the slender brown hand that had been glovelessly gardening, into the clasp of her immaculate grey-clad hand.

She kissed Sylvia's moist red cheek gingerly.

"I am glad to find you up so early, and so industrious," Aunt Emily said. "But, oh, Sylvia, will you never learn the proper care of your complexion and hands? Why, why, are you hatless and gloveless? You distress me beyond measure. Gardening is an excellent occupation for a young lady, quite poetical, and, at the same time, wholesome. But you should wear rubber gloves *always*, never omit them *once*. And of course, never, *never* work in your garden bare-headed."

"But, Aunt Emily," protested Sylvia, wondering to find herself put upon her own defence almost before she had saluted her aunt, "what would be the use of wearing a hat in the garden

when I never try to protect my face sailing? I shove my old hat back 'most always when I'm sailing, and the sun is ever so much hotter and more tanning on the water than it is here." Sylvia smiled convincingly at her aunt, with an air of having satisfactorily disposed of the question.

"Have I ever said, *ever*, that you should not protect your complexion on the water?" sighed Miss Bell. "Obviously these two wrongs cannot make a right. You should wear a veil when you are sailing. You are perfectly brown this minute. Thank heaven, you don't freckle!"

"No, 'm, I don't," said Sylvia, seizing upon this alleviation of her case. "And, Aunt Emily, you simply could not sail a boat if you had a veil on."

"Have I ever, *ever*, said that you should sail a boat? Do young ladies usually sail boats?" demanded Miss Bell.

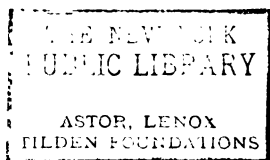
"I don't suppose they do—unless they live at the seashore," said Sylvia sadly.

"Aunt Emily, won't you come into the house? Have you had breakfast? We haven't."

"I took a cup of coffee, execrably bad coffee, at the inn. I expected to breakfast here, with my brother," said Miss Bell. "How is my brother?"



"Sylvia began to rake energetically . . . over against the fence . . . leaned a man, watching her from afar"



"He's well," said Sylvia. "Very busy, of course."

"Of course," agreed her aunt, going toward the house with Sylvia beside her, keeping a hand on O'Malley, who did not enjoy Miss Bell's company.

"I consider it perfectly ridiculous, if not more, *if not more*, that I do not in the least understand my brother's employment," said Miss Bell. She had a habit of repeating her emphatic words with an effect that was almost sinister.

"Oh, well, we should not understand it anyway," said Sylvia lightly.

"*Wel*," echoed Miss Bell. "Possibly not; I spoke of my own deficiency of such knowledge, not of *ours*."

Breakfast was an oppressive meal. Mr. Bell aroused to a decent welcome of his sister, but relapsed into his customary abstraction almost immediately. Sylvia was not accustomed to talk at the table. Now she felt, with her aunt's critical eye upon her, as if she were not accustomed even to eat at the table, so nervous and awkward did that correct lady make her.

"We will go to your room, Sylvia, if you please," announced Miss Bell when the meal was over. "I shall ask you first to report to me

your employment, amusements, reading, since I was here. Then I desire you to lay out before me your wardrobe. I must see what requires mending, or renewal. I shall not be able to return here, I fear, till October."

Sylvia dropped her eyes. She knew that a gleam of joy shot into them. She longed to ask her aunt whether this visit was to be long or short, but dared not risk it.

In her own room, poor Sylvia was put through what she herself called "a course of sprouts." She tried hard to keep her equanimity through it, but Aunt Emily had to perfection the gift of making other people's nerves and temper kindle.

A bright spot of colour soon glowed in Sylvia's cheeks, her eyes grew black, as the pupils expanded, and they flashed dangerously. Her answers grew shorter, and she fell back on nonsense, as an avenue of escape from worse. Unfortunately her Aunt Emily could not see the most distant resemblance to playfulness in funny replies to herself. Her dignity stood hopelessly in the way of anything like humour.

"Sylvia," she said at last sternly, "you are growing up, and, I regret to say, you are not growing up according to my ideals of what a young lady should be. I shall talk seriously to

my brother about you. It is frightful that he should be so engrossed in whatever that may be upon which he spends his time, that he cannot do his duty by his one child. I must order a light suit for you; I shall not be here in time to get it before you will need it in the fall. According to your own admission you are singularly deficient in womanly, housewifely accomplishments. Although you tell me that you are determined to remedy this lack, I must say, painful as it is to say this, that I have not very great confidence in your fulfilment of this commendable resolution. I shall strongly advise a boarding school for you this year, strongly advise it. I shall not be here more than two days on this visit, but I shall do my best to gain my brother's ear and make him see that it is necessary for you to be sent away to school."

"Aunt Emily, I do not want to go! I am learning a lot, truly, and I don't want to leave home. O'Mal—" Poor Sylvia stopped herself hastily. It would never do to tell this unsympathetic lady, who did not like animals, that she could not leave O'Malley to pine himself to death.

Miss Bell raised her eyebrows. She had a way

of raising them that was equal to any mustard plaster for producing a tingling on other people's surfaces.

"I have no doubt, no *doubt*, that you prefer to remain here, running wild, Sylvia," she said, rising. "But you are fifteen years old. It is my duty to ignore your present wishes for your ultimate good. You are my own brother's sole child; I must do my duty by you."

"And you look a little like father, you really do," said Sylvia. "I wonder how it is that you are so different, so very different from him?"

Miss Bell glanced at her sharply, but Sylvia's face was blank.

"There are great differences, frequently, between various members of a family," Miss Bell said, leaving the room.

Cassandra Billings lectured Sylvia frequently and considerably upon her deficiencies, but she sometimes resented Miss Bell's effect upon the girl, being one of those not uncommon women who prefer to be the sole disciplinarians of their well-beloveds.

When Sylvia came downstairs, a half hour after her aunt's reappearance, she wore such a gloomy face that Cassandra's heart went out to her.

"Maybe she is a romp," Cassandra said to Miss Bell in reply to a comment from that lady when Sylvia had passed, "but she's above doing anything mean, unkind, or in any ways low down, so sometimes I don't know but what we ought to leave Miss Sylvia alone to work out her own salvation, and be thankful she's the noble sort of creature she is."

That afternoon the catastrophe happened which had long been threatening on Miss Bell's visits. Sylvia was getting too big to endure patiently the interference of a person who had no authority over her. She resented her aunt's injustice to her and the interest that hid itself under a nagging method. With all her might Sylvia fought herself to keep in check her justifiable annoyance, and this very effort at self-control put her nerves on edge, so that she became hourly in greater danger of doing what she quite honestly did not mean, nor want to do. Never on any previous visit had Miss Bell been so exasperating as she was this time. Sylvia's nerves, and temper, also, were keyed up; she fervently thanked her lucky stars that Aunt Emily would stay but two days, "in this hot weather, too!" Sylvia thought.

Aunt Emily did not like O'Malley, she liked

no dog, still less a cat. O'Malley was banished during Miss Bell's visits, and, quite well knowing who banished him, he felt toward his mistress' aunt precisely as one would expect him to: he returned her dislike with interest.

That afternoon Miss Bell had hung a delicate-hued dinner dress, which she had brought with her, upon a chair in the dining room, after Susie had ironed out of it the wrinkles acquired on its journey. Miss Bell carefully dressed for dinner at her brother's house, with a shadowy idea of setting Sylvia an example of propriety.

O'Malley, lacking Sylvia's company, had taken himself for a solitary walk that afternoon, and, finding the day unexpectedly warm, had returned by the way of the beach, and indulged in a cooling bath. With most of the consequent wetness not removed by the shake, and the roll on the sand with which he had followed it up, O'Malley had come home by the dusty highroad. Finding the door open, he had come into the house to look up Sylvia, blissfully indifferent to the combined salt water and dust mingled into solid results on his rough coat.

Sylvia was nowhere about, but partly on the floor, partly on a chair in the dining room, O'Malley found a delicate silver-blue silk skirt

which seemed to him desirable. He pawed down the part that rested on the chair, circled around and around on the whole till he had it properly massed for his purpose, curled up in the middle of it and went to sleep.

He was aroused nearly an hour later by a shrill cry, a clamour of voices. He leaped to his feet. There was Sylvia half-laughing, half-crying, and Miss Bell with a broom which she had raised to smite O'Malley, but was restrained by Sylvia's weight against her arm.

"You shall not, Aunt Emily! You sha'n't strike him! He didn't know!" Sylvia was screaming hysterically.

O'Malley ran out of the door, to the lawn. Miss Bell came after him, broom raised, wrath in her eye. O'Malley could easily have run away from her, but Sylvia was still clinging to her, and O'Malley was not sure whether he should go or stay, as long as his mistress was in the fray.

At that moment there came along a man, driving a thin horse in a light wagon, laden with tinware.

He stopped and entered the gate. "Want anything in my line to-day?" he asked. "Fine dog that. I'd like just such a dog to watch my

stuff when I'm in houses. Not for sale, is he?"

"He's to be given away," said Miss Bell, taking a sudden resolution. "He's not a fit dog for a house. He'd be just the thing for you. Catch him. He doesn't bite. Take him away with you."

The man put his hand on the unsuspecting O'Malley's collar.

"Nice dog! Fine fellow!" he said sincerely, and O'Malley wagged his tail.

Sylvia went up to the man deadly pale, her eyes coal black, burning in the pallor.

"Don't you dare try to take that dog," she said. "He's mine. This woman doesn't even live here. Don't you touch him."

"Sylvia!" said her aunt sharply. "I am the girl's aunt, and you are to do as I tell you. Take your dog and leave."

"I guess, little lady, that what this lady says goes! Sorry. I'll give you a fine piece of aluminum ware for him, lady," the man said, and stooped to lift O'Malley.

"At him! Bite him!" cried Sylvia.

O'Malley turned with a growl, but before he had carried out Sylvia's orders, fortunately for his own existence, the man dropped O'Malley.

Sylvia seized the dog's collar and set out

on a run across the lawn. Mad with grief and rage, her over-wrought nerves snapped at this culmination of a trying day.

She ran straight to her father's laboratory, straight to the forbidden sanctum, in which she, nor any one else, except her father and Eben Tompkins, was never allowed to set foot.

Sylvia burst in the door and stood before her father's amazed eyes, a sorry figure.

Grief and anger had altered her face to such an extent that even Mr. Bell's abstraction was startled into full consciousness of what he saw.

"Sylvia!" he cried. "What is it?"

"Father, save him, save him! Send her away. She's giving O'Malley to a man. He's mine, my one dear, dear chum. Send her away. What right has she? O'Malley, O'Malley, O'Malley!" Sylvia's voice rose to a scream.

Mr. Bell came to her and laid an arm upon her shoulder.

"Do you mean your aunt?" he asked with remarkable understanding. "O'Malley? Is that—that is your dog? Certainly no one shall take him from you. Sylvia, be still."

"Father, father, oh, you darling father," sobbed Sylvia, bursting into tears at this kindness. "O'Malley lay on her dress-up skirt; it

had no business in the dining room. She was giving him to a tin man; he came along. Father, I can't stand it! She's nagged at me all day. Father, am I so bad? I only sail, and do things! I'm not wicked, honest; nor unladylike, not really. Send her away, father! Don't let her make me go off to school. I want to be here, right here. And, oh, father, my own O'Malley!"

"Sylvia," said Mr. Bell quietly, "I had no idea you felt like this. Go to your room and lie down. Take your dog with you. Rest assured you shall not give him up. Surely you can rest on my promise? I am grieved to see you in such a state; you have always struck me as a particularly happy child. Will you go to your room—with your dog—and try to calm yourself, and to rest?"

"Yes, father. I'm sorry I came here, but I had to. Thank you, father dear," Sylvia said. She raised his hand to her lips and kissed it.

Mr. Bell looked at her, then looked at his hand, a new expression dawning in his eyes. He laid that hand upon Sylvia's disordered hair.

"Where else should you go, except to your father, when you are in trouble?" he asked.

Sylvia and O'Malley crept back to the house,

and up to her room by the back stairs. They both had a long, refreshing sleep, Sylvia's head on O'Malley's rough side, O'Malley's head bent forward on her shoulder.

When Sylvia awoke, chancing to look out of the window, she saw her father coming in from the laboratory unusually early.

He and his sister had a long, long talk before tea. What was said no one, of course, would ever know. Sylvia felt a warm sense of assurance that its result would not be to condemn her. She was suddenly quite happy, for she felt that out of the torments of the day there was emerging a new acquaintance with her own father.

Tea was a dreary meal. An oppressive silence reigned. Miss Bell maintained a frigid air of offended virtue. Mr. Bell never did talk at the table, Sylvia was too uncomfortable either to talk, or to eat much.

In the morning Miss Bell went away. She bade Sylvia a dignified, cold good-bye, her manner distant as it had never been before.

"Good-bye, Sylvia," she said. "I regret that you take the attitude toward me that you do take, and that you were so much disturbed yesterday. Perhaps I did not realise that you

were so much attached to that disgusting dog. I still feel that I was within my rights, and that I acted toward you for the ultimate best."

"Well, of course, Aunt Emily," said Sylvia, looking at her aunt with candid eyes, not intending disrespect, but merely to state a well-known fact, "of course you were very angry with O'Malley, and me, and wanted to get square with us. I suppose that will make a difference about your correcting me after this, because—well, it puts us all together in a lump, doesn't it? Too bad your skirt was spoiled. I'll save up and pay for it. Or will it clean?"

"Nonsense; it isn't the skirt," said Miss Bell curtly. "Good-bye, Sylvia. I sincerely hope that the Bell common sense may rescue you from the ruin that seems to threaten you."

With which valedictory, Miss Bell's brief visit ended, and she departed in the carriage which had come to take her to the station.

Sylvia turned from the door to dust and set in order the rooms on the lower floor. She felt filled to overflowing with the domestic goodness of which her aunt despaired for her. If her father stood by her, then she longed to do some daughterly offices for him, although he should not know of her doing them.

Reliving her mad flight to her father's laboratory and his patience with her unprecedented intrusion, one thing began to stand out in Sylvia's memory. Her father's table was strewn with instruments, compasses, T-squares, rulers, other instruments for mechanical drawing. And when she had burst open the door her father had thrown a large sheet of paper over the table, as if to conceal something. Was this so, or did she imagine it? And if it were so, what did it matter?

CHAPTER IX

"ONE MORNING, OH, SO EARLY"

"Ready for adventures, O'Malley?" inquired Sylvia, meeting her boon companion as she came forth especially early a few days after her aunt's departure.

"All right; come on, then! Adventures ashore first, adventures afloat after that! I woke up this morning, O'Malley, my gossip, when 'the grey dawn was breaking'—but it was a pink and red and gold dawn that broke, O'Malley!"

O'Malley leaped and whined his appreciation of Sylvia's conversation. She hugged him hard, and ran down the street in pursuit of supplies.

Waking at an hour long before the greater part of the world was astir, Sylvia had formed a sudden resolution to go for a long sail with no one but O'Malley to accompany her. This would mean that she would return too late for breakfast, but it would not be the first time that she had elected to eat that meal informally on board her boat; her absence would not matter to any one.

There was a small grocery in the village, not far distant from her home, which was always open at an improbable hour. Lobster fishermen got in with their hauls before dawn, and many of them repaired to this grocery for hot coffee, made for them by the grocer's wife, and a satisfying, if not satisfactory, meal of bread and thick ginger cake and crackers from the grocer's glass-fronted tin boxes. Early as it was Sylvia knew that she could buy at this place enough to carry her out and back upon her voyage. She had completely forgotten that she had agreed to play tennis with Ruth at half past eight that morning. As was her habit, Sylvia ran down the street; she scarcely could be said to have learned to walk like other children.

No one was abroad, she passed no one, till she came well down toward her goal. Two men were ahead of her, with whom she soon caught up; she slackened her pace to pass them.

One of them turned his head; he was a stranger. But the other put out his hand to O'Malley, and quickly withdrew it when the terrier growled forbiddingly.

"I remember you, but you don't remember me, sir," the man said, laughing. "Or perhaps

you do! You growled at me the other time when I had the pleasure of seeing you."

He turned toward Sylvia as he spoke, and she instantly recognised the keen eyes and resolute chin of the person who had asked her about a boarding place a few days before.

"Good morning," he said, taking off his hat with the same elaborate politeness which Sylvia remembered. "This is the young lady whom I troubled with my own trouble to find lodgings and board. Perhaps you will be interested to learn that I was successful; I have found comfortable quarters."

"I am glad," said Sylvia.

"Yes. My friend here has joined me; we are staying in your pretty town with much pleasure. It is an unusually interesting and lovely section of the country," the man continued, almost, Sylvia thought, as if he wanted to detain her in talk.

"Is it?" she said. "I love it, but I don't know whether it is unusually pretty, or not. I haven't seen many other places."

"I assure you that it is, prettier than almost any other seashore place that I have ever seen," her acquaintance continued. "I imagine that it is, also, an interesting community. Do you

have many literary people here, or painters? I should imagine it might be attractive to people doing special work, artistic, scientific, or anything that required solitude. Do many people come here camping, for instance? Do you happen to know of any one working privately, so to speak? I dearly love to meet that sort of people; I am engaged in a sort of research work myself, in my humble way."

He looked sharply at Sylvia as he spoke, and something within her seemed to contract. What did this mean? Why should this man ask her this question? Unless there were something that he wanted to find out, and he took her for so young a girl that questioning her could do no harm? There was no one in the place that was interested in anything in the least akin to what this man hinted at—except her own father!

Instantly Sylvia resolved not to reveal the fact that her father's occupation seemed to fit into this man's description. And at the base of her resolution was a fear that she could neither define, nor understand, for, although she knew nothing of her father's pursuit, she had always proudly exalted it in her thoughts.

"I think painters do come here," she said.

"There are often people with easels set up on the beach, sketching here in the summer. I wouldn't know if authors came. I wish I did know it, if they do come; I'd dearly love to know an author! There aren't any camps, I think. Of course a young girl like me wouldn't hear of distinguished visitors. The hotel keepers would know."

There was a childlike frankness in Sylvia's manner that was intended to be convincing, and was so.

"Thank you. It doesn't matter, of course. I imagined that you were the sort of girl who ran riot in the summer, on land and sea, and might come across interesting things and people. But it doesn't matter. Much obliged," said the man.

"You're welcome; I haven't done anything," said Sylvia proceeding, this time on a decorous walk, while the strangers fell back to allow her a long start.

In the grocery shop Sylvia found four men, but of quite another sort. They were lobster fishermen, two of them friends of Sylvia's from her earliest days.

"Mornin', Captain Sylvie!" cried one, grinning broadly at the sight of Sylvia.

"Mornin', my hearty; how's your ship nowadays?" cried the other.

"Stanch and seaworthy," returned Sylvia. "How're the lobsters nowadays?"

"Green and awk'ard, green and awk'ard, but lively 's long 's they kin keep out o' hot water," said one of the old boys. "Caught one this mornin', Sylvie, 'bout big enough for your watch charm, chucked him back, told him to go on growin' and git big 'nough to make you a salad."

"That's right," said Sylvia, laughing. "I'm after something to eat now. Will you please give me a half pound of saltines, and a half pound of fig newtons, and a half pound of those gingersnaps, Mr. Barnes?"

"What in time 'er you goin' to do with a pound and a half of them things, Captain Sylvie?" asked one of Sylvia's lobstering acquaintances.

"I'm going out, think I'll go rather far, and I shall not come in till after breakfast. Then there's O'Malley; he'd be good for all of this, if I'd give it to him," said Sylvia. "Good-bye, everybody."

"Good-bye," chorused all the men together, those who had so long known Sylvia, as well as the other two who did not know her.

"Mighty fine little craft, the Lady Sylvia," said Mr. Barnes, the grocer. "Never in all my life seen a finer girl, take her every ways."

"Sho, that's easy! There ain't none, so in all nature you couldn't of seen her," said the lobster fisherman who had caught the under-sized lobster, and had told Sylvia how it had been returned to its native element.

"We've got to hurry, O'Malley," Sylvia said, breaking into a run as she emerged from the shop. "We want to get off before the sun is high."

O'Malley was agreeable to this suggestion, so the girl and dog raced to the beach through the still empty streets.

The beach, also, was deserted when Sylvia ran her rowboat down to the water and sprang like a boy over her bow, vaulting with her hand on its rail, not wetting so much as the edge of her shoe. O'Malley did not succeed as well, perhaps because he had four feet to guard. He sat down in the bow, shaking first one foot then another, for he had been obliged to run into the water before he could leap aboard the little tender.

There was a delightful sunrise breeze stirring when Sylvia hoisted her sail. The girl drew a

long breath of delight as she settled herself in the stern with the tiller in her hand. More than any other hour of the day, she loved this golden dawn for sailing. And she loved the sense of solitude, the great feeling of freedom as she sailed away alone on the face of the waters, responsible to no one, unhampered by obligations to any one, free as a gull to go whither she would, thinking her own thoughts, dreaming her own dreams. Sylvia often was oppressed by the loneliness of her uncompanied, unguided life, then again she was filled with the joy of a liberty that was almost as glorious as that of the dazzling white birds which skimmed, and dived, and soared out over the waters.

There was a long arm of the bay which ran in for more than a mile, forming a peninsula almost opposite Sylvia's home. When the wind favoured, Sylvia loved to navigate in this narrow sheet of water; it required enough skill in navigating to make it interesting.

That morning the wind was favourable to this enterprise, and Sylvia headed her beloved little craft, with the name that was intended to conceal her pride in it, across for the inlet. On the end of its defining shore there was an active chocolate manufactory. The strong odour of

the chocolate awoke Sylvia's appetite, and she began to breakfast from her three paper bags in alternation. O'Malley came aft to make sure that she should not forget that she was neither the one person aboard, nor the sole one to crave sustenance.

Sylvia laughed at O'Malley's imploring eyes, and steadily approaching hitches, by which he mutely begged for her generosity.

"Oh, my Irish dragoon," she cried, "I'd never forget you, however far off you sat!"

Sylvia had taken her rowboat with her that morning, tied astern and following in her wake, half expecting to make *The Walloping Window Blind* fast to the end of a wharf and row farther than she could venture to sail.

As she rounded the point and proceeded slowly up the narrow water path that led inland, Sylvia saw on the pebbly beach a figure that shocked her, precisely as the same sight had shocked her a few mornings before, when Gabriel Gaby was sailing her boat around the island while Sylvia discoursed upon the harmonica.

For now, as then, she recognised the figure as her father, this time alone.

Mr. Bell was clad in an oilskin suit, such as

Sylvia had never seen him wear. He was down on hands and knees groping in the shallow water. What could he seek there? What could he have lost, or expect to find in this out-of-the-way spot?

Sylvia could not hail her father when she first saw him, having that moment completely filled her mouth with a cracker, in order to free her hands for her work. But it was not necessary to hail him; Mr. Bell looked up as the sailboat moved toward him, and, after a closer scrutiny of it, recognised its skipper, and waved his arm to her energetically, beckoning her to come ashore.

Sylvia luffed up, as close to shore as she dared venture.

"Do you want me, father?" she called, her clear young voice easily heard over the narrow space between them.

"Yes. Eben has left me, and has evidently forgotten to come back," Mr. Bell called back.

"I want to get home. Take me off, Sylvia.

"I'll try," said Sylvia, nodding hard.

The problem was how to make the sailboat fast, while she rowed in to get her father. Sylvia looked about her. There was a widening of the inlet farther up, and here she should have

to come to turn around. On one bank there hung out over the water a dead tree trunk, extending nearly straight out from the bank, lightning killed, storm uprooted.

Sylvia pointed it out to her father, and sailed on toward it. Running up into the bow, one arm around the mast, the other holding her boathook, having lashed her tiller straight, Sylvia waited the right instant, and skillfully caught the dead trunk with her hook. Then she threw the coiled rope which she carried on her arm over the misshapen thing and made fast. She lowered her sail so that her boat would not tug at the rope too hard, jumped into the tender, O'Malley at her heels, and rowed rapidly back to where her father stood watching her.

"Well done, my dear!" he said as Sylvia came up. "That's near enough; don't beach, I'll get in where you are."

He wore rubber boots, as well as oilskins, so wading out to the boat meant no discomfort. Mr. Bell clambered in over the stern of the row-boat, where he took his place, and Sylvia pulled back to the sailboat.

Mr. Bell made no attempt at conversation while Sylvia was rowing, probably considering

that enough demand upon her breath. But after she had, with his help, hoisted sail once more, freed *The Walloping Window Blind* from her improvised moorings, turned in the somewhat narrow space the widening of the inlet allowed her, displaying skill in her task, and had fairly got her little craft upon her homeward course, Mr. Bell broke the silence which Sylvia would not have ventured to end.

"You came along most opportunely, my dear," he said. "Of course Eben Tompkins would have remembered where he left me, and that it was his duty to return for me, but he has gone out of town, and will not be back till afternoon. I should have had a tedious wait, a hungry one, and, what is worst of all, a completely wasted day, if you had not come sailing up the stream, like Henry Hudson in *The Half Moon*!"

Sylvia laughed, flushing with pleasure. Before she could reply, her father went on:

"And I am really exceedingly proud of your skill as a navigator, Sylvia. You handled your boat, and the difficulties of the situation remarkably. I have been told that you were a skillful sailor; I find it unexpectedly true."

Sylvia's delight in this commendation from the one being whose praise she would most

value, whose interest she constantly wished she might dare to think she aroused, was almost too keen to be borne. She trembled and turned red, as she said:

"Oh, father, I'm so glad, so fearfully, *fearfully* glad, if you liked it!"

"You are a clever child to handle a boat as you do; of course I like it!" said Mr. Bell. "How did you happen to come into that inlet this morning? Did you guess your father was stranded there?"

Sylvia shook her head, smiling.

"Just happened along," she said happily. "I like to go in there when the wind serves. How did you get there, father? So early?"

"I had Eben take me there, before dawn. Then he went away. He was to have returned to fetch me, but he is often forgetful, and he must have left town on the business I intrusted to him without remembering my situation. I am engaged on a matter that made me wish to visit that spot." Mr. Bell glanced at a tin pail which he tenderly carried as if it had some connection with this mysterious "business."

Sylvia dared ask no more. It flashed across her mind that when she had seen her father with Eben on the island, they were digging.

This time her father had been upon his knees, scattering sand with his hands. Could he be burying something, treasure, for instance, as it was buried in stories of adventure?

Again, as so many times recently, Sylvia felt an undefined fear. But what could there be to fear? It was her father, her great father, wise, learned, prudent, honourable, upon whose movements his ignorant little daughter was bold enough to speculate, and as to fear in that connection—that was worse than foolish!

“I could find it in my heart to wish that you had brought provisions in your caravel, most noble captain, and that I might be invited to eat at the captain’s table,” Mr. Bell interrupted her thoughts to say plaintively.

Sylvia’s happy laugh rang out. Her father was playing with her, actually playing with her! Oh, they were getting acquainted! Nothing could prove it like this!

“I have provisions, honoured passenger,” she ventured timidly, and plucked up heart to continue when she saw her father smile, “but they are somewhat humble for a nobleman of your station. They were shipped from the supply house of Mr. Peter Barnes. Such as they are, you are most welcome to them. There

would be more, but I ate of them, not knowing that I should bring back a noble passenger, and my other passenger, who is a hearty Irishman, called Charles O'Malley, did eat of them as freely as I would dole them out."

She offered her father the three brown paper bags, none of them by any means full, with a pretty smile, shy, yet beaming with pleasure.

"Bravo, Captain Sylvia!" Mr. Bell said. "That was generously spoken. And I am not in a position to be chooser, since I am most certainly a beggar. This was the sort of breakfast I liked when I was a boy, and I have this morning a boy's appetite, and for like cause: I have been up since before the stars had gone in and the sun come up, rowing across the bay, and playing in the sand!"

He helped himself to all three varieties of dry delicacies which Sylvia offered him, filling both hands, and eating them with a satisfaction that thrilled his enraptured child. Sylvia felt that she could have fallen at his feet and worshipped him for no other reason than that he sat there, in her boat, letting himself be sailed home by her, and that he beautifully felt hungry, and ate her cakes and crackers with unmistakable enjoyment.

The wind had increased, the course home could be made in a few long tacks. Sylvia wished that it might be prolonged all day. All day? Forever! She glowed with the rapture of doing service.

But the happiest voyage must end. In a short time Sylvia had made her moorings, her father had helped her furl her sail, and she had rowed him ashore, begging to be allowed to do this when he offered to row, showing so much feeling when he seemed likely to deprive her of her privilege, that Mr. Bell, wondering, yielded the point.

"Are you coming home, Sylvia?" Mr. Bell asked, as they turned from tying up the rowboat on the beach.

"No, sir," said Sylvia. "I must go to Mrs. Leveritt's. I forgot that I promised to play tennis with Ruth, with her niece, this morning."

"Always be punctual to your engagements, my dear," her father said. "But it is not becoming in me to criticise your deficiency, since I have profited by it. You have done me a very real service this morning, my little girl, and I thank you appreciatively. Let me add, my dear, that I have also enjoyed your com-

panionship. You are an excellent shipmate. I have had a delightful voyage."

"Oh, father! Oh, father! How lovely, lovely!" gasped Sylvia, overcome.

Mr. Bell raised his hat with a courtesy that even his oilskin suit and rubber boots could not make unimpressive, and walked slowly up the beach.

Sylvia stood looking after him. Then she fell on her knees and hugged O'Malley till he coughed. Then she sprang up and ran up the path, over the dune, down the street that led to Mrs. Leveritt's. She felt as if she flew, her body had no apparent weight, the leaping joy in her heart, setting every pulse a-tingle, filled her with a buoyancy that denied her feet and winged her.

Forgetting again that she had broken her promise to Ruth, she dashed into Mrs. Leveritt's house and straight up to that lovable person.

"Mrs. Leveritt, oh, Mrs. Leveritt, will you, could you let me come here and learn how to keep house, to cook, to do everything the way you do? When you are busy, would you care if I just sat and watched you, out of the way, you know, and not talking? I've got to learn! I must learn to be nice, and useful, and—and

nice! You know; valuable, don't you see?" Sylvia cried all in a breath.

"Sylvia, my dear! Of course you may come if you like," said Mrs. Leveritt. "I'd be delighted to have you about, but I'd rather you'd talk, dear! Why do you want to do this, so suddenly, childie?"

"It's my father," cried Sylvia. "I found him quite far away, without any way to get home, so I brought him, in my boat, don't you know? And he—he seemed to like it, Mrs. Leveritt, and me! He did, truly! He played with me so beautifully! And he did say he was proud of me, the way I sailed her, and—and did things. Really, he said just that, my father! So I've got to learn everything. He mustn't like only the way I sail a boat. He must be proud of his daughter, his *daughterly* daughter, don't you see? Oh, Mrs. Leverett, suppose, only suppose, he'd like a good deal about me!"

Mrs. Leveritt arose and went over to Sylvia with a swift impetuous movement, and folded her in her arms. There were tears in her eyes and she held Sylvia close.

"Sylvia, you dear, dear, lovable child!" she cried. "I'll teach you anything, do anything that I can do for you. You dear girl! Of

course your father loves you, is pr
Indeed he will 'like a good deal
you precious little goose! Have yo
that he cared for you? Who w
thankful for a loyal, loving, lovable
like you? Poor, poor, lonely, splen
Sylvia!"

"Oh, how good you are to me, Mrs. L
cried Sylvia. "I think I'll be a little
daughter, too, if you'll have me! I'd
be."

"That's a bargain, sealed," cried
Leveritt, kissing Sylvia's warm lips.

"Well," said Ruth, "and what about
Seems to me you have broken your prom
me, Miss Bell! What about tennis at
past eight?"

"There wasn't any, Ruthie! I went
early, before sunrise, and I didn't get back
just a while ago. I'm sorry, indeed I
Will you play this afternoon? And I'm go
to make up for my sins by something n
Please forgive me," pleaded Sylvia.

"I suppose I must," Ruth pretended
grumble. "I'm afraid you're one of tho
people no one stays mad with; don't yo
always get forgiven?"

Sylvia nodded, laughing, but wiping her eyes at the same time, with the back of her hand, as Lloyd might have done.

“Because, you know, I like to be. I don’t want to be horrid, and I do want to be forgiven if—”

“If you are horrid!” Lloyd finished her sentence, coming into the room at that instant. “Never mind, Tinker Bell; I guess you’re not! Not so horridly horrid!”

CHAPTER X

STRANGERS WITHIN THE GATES

"If you'll put on clothes you never want to wear again—or else chain armour!—I'll tell you something, and show you something, this afternoon," said Sylvia pausing at Mrs. Leveritt's gate to say good-bye to Ruth, who had come so far with her.

"Which are the clothes for? To hear in, or to see in? Why do I have to wear such strong, or else such good-for-nothing clothes to be told something, or shown something?" laughed Ruth.

"You don't, if we stop with the telling, but you do if it comes to showing," returned Sylvia. "And that's all I'll tell you now, because I don't want to skim the cream pot. I wasn't going to tell you, not any one, this secret. I've been keeping it to myself since I found it. But I owe you something for the tennis you didn't get this morning, and there's no reason why you shouldn't be told; just my nonsense. Want to go mystery stalking, in a jungle, this afternoon?"

"Not Lloyd?" hinted Ruth.

Sylvia pursed her lips dubiously and made a little grimace.

"A boy!" she said. "Still, of course, he's all right. I do like him. I thought, maybe, it would be just you and I. The more know a secret, the less a secret it is! To tell the truth I thought perhaps you and I would have it for a sort of kiddish play—be Valkyries, or— But that really would be too babyish, I suppose! I'm always thinking I can make-believe the way I used to a year or two ago, but it falls flat when I try it. I make-believe just as much, but it's in another way. Well, all right then, if you want him. Tell Lloyd to come. He may as well, I suppose. And don't tell him I didn't want him at first. It sounds as if I didn't like him, and I do, lots! But two nice girls never seem to need a boy around, do they? I love to romp with boys when there's a crowd of girls and boys, but if it's just one or two friends, then I'd rather leave out the boy. But bring Lloyd; it is sort of contemptible to drop him out of our things."

Sylvia ended her speech, which had taken the form of an argument, pro and con, with herself, and Ruth laughed, without explaining why.

"All right; we'll come—or are you here?" she asked.

Sylvia shook her head. "No. Near start from my house," she said, and with a slap on O'Malley's back to arouse he had lain down, despairing of departing this lingering talk at the gate, and fallen into a nap in the sunshine.

Ruth and Lloyd made their appearance immediately after their own lunch and dinner. The Bells dined at mid-day and Mr. Bell preferred it.

"Haven't you pounced upon Ruth's costume she asked disapprovingly. but that dress torn to tatters. Lloyd is all right; khaki w stand 'most anything, but that dimity!"

"I have other dresses, Sylvia, but this is the one I care least about. I didn't bring real shabby things to Aunt Helen's; it's got to do," Ruth said.

"No, it hasn't got to do," Sylvia corrected her. "The skirt I wore summer before last would be just right for you now, you little speck! I've an old khaki skirt in the attic, and I'm going to make you wear it, and leave that dress here; an old shirtwaist of mine, too."

"Seems to me you're always fitting me and Lloyd out with clothes!" laughed Ruth.

"Only once before," Sylvia reminded her. "It's because you don't seem to know what real seafaring, hiking, or warm clothes mean!"

She departed, and in a few minutes whistled for Ruth to come to her room.

"Found them!" Sylvia announced. "Off with the new and on with the old! That doesn't sound right; that's some sort of a saying—I know! 'Off with the old love, before you're on with the new!' That's what it reminded me of. Don't you hate to get a thing like that into your head and not be able to sort it out of a tangle?"

"I don't often; I don't read a whole lot, and I suppose that's how you get them."

Ruth surveyed herself in Sylvia's mirror without enthusiasm. The waist was well enough, but the khaki skirt was shabby; Ruth found it in her heart to regret her blue and white dimity.

Sylvia read the expression of her face accurately.

"Course it doesn't look as well now," she said. "But after the dimity was torn into fringes by the brambles, it wouldn't look as well as this does. Besides, it would probably be so ragged

.

that you couldn't walk through the street after midnight. And, anyway, you've wear this, Miss Hapgood, because it's suit-

"No wonder they call you Captain Sylvia," cried Ruth, but not objecting to being about by this girl who seemed to her in way a superior being, fit to take command.

"Now," Sylvia began when she had rejoined Lloyd and O'Malley on the "this is the secret! And remember: Under circumstances, *none*, are you to tell, or in any way betray, that you know a thing about it. And you are not to go ever without me. Promise! On your honour tell?" Where aren't we to go? What aren't we

"Where I'm going to take you. What I'm going to tell you," said Sylvia. "Promise first?" demanded Lloyd. "Where I'm going to take you. What I'm going to tell you," said Sylvia. "Promise first?" demanded Lloyd.

"Oh, promise first!" exclaimed Lloyd. "We have promised. Coming here to be told a secret is the same thing as a promise not to tell, isn't it? You told Ruth you were going to let us into a secret. Very well; if we had meant to give it away we wouldn't have come, would we?"

"Why, of course!" cried Sylvia, pleased

approval in her face. "That would be so, if you were truly honourable. That's decent, Lloyd. Once in a while boys do have a kind of solid common-sensed honour, without making a fuss about it, the way girls do."

"Jiminy, what strong praise! Makes me feel quite overcome! Thanks, Tink! Get on with your mystery; what's the use wasting time?" Lloyd said.

"Well," Sylvia granted the justice of this. "One day, not long ago, I went walking with O'Malley. We went into a path I'd always wanted to explore, but never had. We got into the worst brambles, the most overgrown path you ever in all your life saw, dreadful! Don't you know you asked me where I'd got those scratches? They were healed when you noticed them, but they showed. That's where I got them, going through that place. It is dreadful! But I kept on—"

"Trust you!" grinned Lloyd.

"And at last I came upon a tiny house," Sylvia continued, with a glance at him.

"It has a lean-to roof, and it looks old; it's going to pieces fast. It sits in almost as great a tangle of briars as fill up the path to it, but you can see where the garden used

to be. Then—here's the greatest part of it!—there's a path right down the dune in front of the house, to the *beach*! And at the foot of the path there is a cove, with a great rock hiding it from the bay, a cove in which a rowboat could easily be used, and if the tide were high, a little sailboat might come in there!" Sylvia waited for Ruth and Lloyd to be impressed, but they were not.

"What of that?" asked Lloyd.

"I don't believe anybody knows that house is there! Of course I can't be sure of that, but I do believe it. It would be the greatest place for—for anything! Gabriel Gaby said that there was a story about smugglers using that inlet long ago. Can't you see what a splendid place it is? Only I don't know what it could be used for. There's something could be done there, if we could think of it."

"Sure thing!" cried Lloyd, suddenly and unexpectedly catching fire, his imagination enkindled by the magic word "smugglers." "A lair, you know."

"That's what I thought," cried Sylvia. "But then what would the lair be for? It all seems like something big, that you couldn't quite get your hand on."

"Aren't we going to look it over?" asked Lloyd. "Come on. Wish you'd told me about the brambles; I'd have worn a catcher's mask. No use spoiling my beauty."

"You couldn't," began Sylvia, but Lloyd stopped her short by falling back a few steps, striking an attitude and demanding in a voice of thunder:

"What!"

"Oh, I didn't mean that the way it sounded!" cried Sylvia. "I meant it wouldn't be spoiled, only damaged, for the scratches heal right up."

"Lucky for you that you meant no more," growled Lloyd in a deep chest tone.

"Let's find a hatchet and take it along. I can chop off the scratchers."

"What a bright idea, Lloyd! How did you happen to think of it? Of course we can cut out the path," Sylvia said, turning to go after a hatchet.

"My ancestors came to this country when it was a wilderness; I probably inherited that from them," exclaimed Lloyd without a smile.

"Hatchet, or brightness, or brambles?" asked Sylvia, departing.

After Sylvia had returned with the hatchet the expedition was ready to start.

Ruth found the path trying almost beyond endurance, but Sylvia and Lloyd enjoyed battling their way through the obstacles besetting it. The hatchet proved to be useful; it was possible to get through without such wounds as Sylvia bore from her first exploration of this path.

"Here it is!" Sylvia announced triumphantly, pointing out the small house which so interested her.

"Did you go inside?" asked Ruth after they had all three flattened their faces against the dingy window panes on all sides.

"Yes. But we can see all of it, except the upstairs, and that isn't much, can't be much under this slanting roof," Sylvia told her. "We must go down the path to the beach; the cove is what I like best."

"Somebody has been inside lately," said Ruth. She pointed to vines freshly torn from before the door, and to a splinter on the bottom of the door, still showing a white wound, proving that there had not been enough time since it was made to blacken it.

"There surely has been some one here!" cried Sylvia, instantly excited. "To think of your noticing that, you who don't care at all about

any of it! Then some one besides ourselves does know of this house, Lloyd! Oh, how I wish I could find out about it!"

She led the way down the duneside. It was steep and hard to travel, with its obtrusive branches, weeds and slippery, sandy soil.

The tide was high and Sylvia pointed out to her friends that there was enough water in the cove to float *The Walloping Window Blind*, provided she had her centreboard up.

"Well, I only wish she were here!" sighed Ruth. "How are we expected to get out? Wait till the tide goes down? That would be a little forever, and, besides, we'd get wet feet."

"Oh, Ruth, don't shoes and stockings come off where you live?" laughed Sylvia. "We'll take ours off and wade, little silly! Much more fun."

She dropped down as she spoke and had her feet bare in a moment, Lloyd was only an instant slower, but Ruth took off her shoes and stockings so reluctantly that both the others laughed.

"Ruth does certainly hate to do anything she's not used to doing," said Lloyd.

The three paddled out along the edge of the cove, even Ruth admitting that the soft sand and cool water felt good to her tired soles.

When they had come out upon the beach the three shod themselves again, and went on down the sand, talking earnestly about the little house, unable to reach any conclusion as to its past uses, or its present usefulness to themselves.

As they drew near to Gabriel Gaby's shack O'Malley stood stiffly motionless for a moment, then he bounded forward, growling. There, engaged with Gabriel in talk, stood the two strangers whom Sylvia had met on her way to Peter Barnes' grocery in that early morning when she had gone there to purchase supplies for her voyage, one of whom was her interlocutor at the fence on the morning that her aunt had come.

"Those men!" Sylvia exclaimed, stopping short much as O'Malley had done.

"Who are they?" cried Ruth, ready to be afraid of them.

"I don't know. They are staying somewhere in town, want to know authors, or artists, or students of some sort," said Sylvia. "Never mind; they are all right. I wouldn't mind hearing what they say to Gabriel; it's safe enough to stop, if Gabriel Gaby's there."

She went on, slightly in advance of the other

two. The men looked up as she approached, and both saluted her with a deep bow.

"Here is our young lady of the garden, and also of the early morning walk," said the man to whom Sylvia had twice before spoken.

"This is the girl I told you about, always sailin' and rampagin' round, knows the whole country, coast in partic'lar," said Gabriel Gaby proudly.

"Indeed! I had no idea she was already a sort of acquaintance of mine," said the stranger.

"Will you properly introduce us, Mr. Gaby?"

"Miss Bell, Miss Sylvia Bell. Her friends, stayin' in town this summer, Miss Ruth Hapgood, Mr. Lloyd Hapgood; cousins, these are, not sister and brother," said Gaby, feeling called upon to make everything clear. "But I d' know 's I ever heard your name?"

"My name is William Lindley, this is my friend, Mr. Edward Gersom," said the spokesman.

"Just so. Sylvie an' the Hapgoods, this is Mr. Lindley. He's here lookin' fer oyster beds, huntin' oysters. I tell him they ain't any hereabouts. An' he's lookin' up rocks, and things of that sort, at the same time. What do you call 'em? A nater stoodent?"

"And authors and artists?" suggested Sylvia, looking into Mr. Lindley's eyes.

"Oh, well, not precisely studying them, you know; not precisely!" he laughed. "Merely like to get in touch with people of tastes similar to my own. You have a good memory, Miss Bell."

"She knows more about this part of the country than the old settlers," said Gaby.

"This gentleman was askin' me a sight of questions, Sylvie. Says I to him: There's a girl here could tell you a lot more 'n I could, young 's she is, on account of the way she runs 'round. Then you just happened along. Nothin' I've ever noticed more in the course of my long life than the way things happen in it."

"They do, indeed, Mr. Gaby," said Mr. Lindley. "The way things keep happening in this life of ours is one of its most noticeable characteristics! Miss Bell, would you object to telling a stranger, a student, who loves your beautiful coast and town, anything that strikes you as interesting about it? What I'd like to find is a hermit, or a haunted house, anything interesting, mysterious, romantic!"

"Like oyster beds, or geology?" asked Sylvia.

Mr. Lindley darted upon her a look so sharp,

so sudden that Sylvia could not maintain her look of blank innocence. Her face changed, she knew that into her eyes there flashed a conscious look; she knew that she looked guilty of something that she was trying to hide, although there was nothing of the sort in her mind. But Sylvia felt a distrust of this stranger so violent that it took possession of her, and after all it did amount to having something to hide, for she had no desire to betray it.

"You are not a little girl after all, Miss Sylvia Bell," said Mr. Lindley after a brief silence in which he had keenly scrutinised Sylvia's flushed face and veiled eyes. "I think you are wiser than you seem, or mean to seem. If you knew of anything really interesting, or important in your native place, would you share your knowledge with a stranger?"

"Wouldn't that depend upon what it was?" asked Sylvia. "I don't like to talk unless—unless—"

"Unless what? Unless you know to whom you are talking? Possibly why he was interested in this section?" suggested Mr. Lindley. "Quite right, Miss Bell. Again let me say that you are not a romping, thoughtless girl, as you are considered. It is my opinion that you may

be the person whom I should like to take into my confidence. I have talked to almost every one in this place, and have not found any one who seemed likely to further my studies. I have an impression that you could. Some day, before long, I shall make a point of seeing you. Please don't distrust me; I assure you that I am not in the least dangerous, nor engaged in lawless pursuits." He looked again keenly at Sylvia as he said these last words, but they had no significance for her and her troubled eyes did not change as they looked steadfastly into his.

Sylvia drew Ruth's hand through her arm and walked on down the beach. Lloyd, who had been having trouble with a shoe string, came running after them and caught up with them.

"Say, Sylvia, what's up?" he said, the moment he had done this.

"Yes, what is?" echoed Sylvia. "You see it, too, don't you? I haven't an idea. I am wondering and wondering! Why does that man say he's interested in so many things, such queer ones? What does he mean I could tell him? I've seen him, this is three times. He makes my back creep! I don't like him,

I don't know why, but I don't like him! He scares me. He worries me. It all seems so silly, but he does!"

"I don't see what could harm you, whatever he's up to," said Lloyd sensibly. "I wouldn't worry. You don't have to talk to him. And you don't know haunted houses, nor hermits, do you?"

"Of course not! Except hermit cakes!" Sylvia cried, with a sudden lifting of her gloom. "But that's partly why! It seems so silly to be sniffing around this nice, quiet place, where there never has been anything queer."

"I wonder if he isn't sent here to find out some special thing that you don't know about," said Ruth. "It seems so funny that he knows just exactly what kind of a thing he wants to hear about! He doesn't ask about anything, no matter what, that is interesting; it has to be just the right thing."

"Ruth, you are so queer!" cried Sylvia, stopping short to regard her friend with surprised admiration. "You don't seem to bother one bit about things, and then, all of a sudden, you say just what I've been wanting to say! Of course that's it! He wanted to be told about people who stayed off by themselves, and did

some kind of work, secretly; that was the first time he said anything about it. And this time it is mysteries, or hidden things, too. He doesn't want to hear any kind of story that is interesting, only those kinds!"

"There isn't any one like that here, working secretly, is there?" asked Ruth.

"Except your father," said Lloyd.

Sylvia cried out, and pressed both hands over her ears.

"Stop! Stop!" she cried. "I won't let you! I won't hear it in my own head!" With that, and without another word of farewell, or comment, Sylvia turned sharply to the right and fled up a path that ran over one of the steepest dunes, her head down, looking neither to left nor to right, running as one runs in a heavy wind, or to escape from blows.

CHAPTER XI

SYLVIA POINTS THE WAY

"What do you want to do?" asked Ruth.

"Nothing," said Sylvia promptly. "I mean the kind of nothing that's more nothing than not doing anything."

"Start over, Tinker Bell," Lloyd advised her. "Try again, poor Tink! Maybe, if you try to use your mind, you'll find that you can save a little of it, still, but it's going fast."

Sylvia laughed. "That's just what I mean," she insisted. "I'd like to do down on the sand and make houses, the way I did when I was no size at all, and just play! It's a great deal more like doing nothing than it is to sit and hold your hands."

"Tink, dear, I never thought of asking you to hold my hands!" Lloyd assured her gravely. "Never once thought of it! But of course, if you feel like it—"

"Well, then, *one's* hands!" cried Sylvia. "And if it wasn't several hundred degrees in the shade to-day I'd use my hands to some

purpose, Master Lloyd, making it pleasant for your impertinent self!"

"I know what you mean, Sylvia," Ruth interposed. "Fooling loafing is more loafing than doing nothing. Let's go down to the beach and play."

Sylvia went into the house and came back after a while with a small basket in which lay a suggestive white napkin, enfolding something that promised cookies, and a thermos bottle.

"Made some lemonade, good and cold, and got some cookies," Sylvia announced, a little breathlessly. "If we're going back to building sand houses we've got to have something to munch; kiddies always have crackers and cookies and apples to eat."

"Hunch! Munch! Lunch!" remarked Lloyd. "I can see the girders to build up a beautiful poem there."

"Mercy me! If Lloyd thinks of making up a poem you're not the only one whose mind is in danger, Sylvia! Let's hurry on," cried Ruth, starting off.

They went down to the beach through the dune path, which, being oceanward, was shady in the afternoon.

At the foot of the dunes there was deep shade;

their height cut off the heat of the sun, now just dipping westerly from high in the southern zenith.

Sylvia instantly threw herself upon the fine white, packed sand, cooled by an outgoing tide that had moistened it, some of its refreshment remaining, though the heat had nearly dried it.

"Oh, the lovely stuff!" Sylvia cried, running her finger through it, burrowing down till she reached the grey-brown of moist sand below the surface.

"Isn't it nice!" Ruth joined her friend and imitated her movements. "Why does it seem to cool you? It isn't particularly cool."

"It's so smooth and quiet," Sylvia answered promptly. "On a hot day anything so smooth—like sand, or silk, or—anything!—makes me feel cooler. Nerves, I suppose."

"Quiet! Quiet sand, Tink! Come, now!" Lloyd protested.

"Well, you certainly can't say it's noisy," Sylvia persisted. "It feels quiet. I think all words like that can be changed around to go with other things besides the ones they're meant to go with."

She had been scooping busily as she talked

and had thrown up a low wall of sand, forming an enclosure. Within this she began to lay up the sand walls of a house, patting and shaping fast, with expert touches of a lifelong habit.

"If mud pies are in order, I'm coming in," said Lloyd, also throwing himself down on the sand, and beginning to dig.

"Mud pies! Architecture!" retorted Sylvia. "Mine is a haughty gentleman's residence; he won't allow the public to come within his grounds, so he has built a wall around his estate."

"Mine is going to be an orphan asylum," Ruth said, and the others laughed.

"It will be used only for milkmen's orphans."

"Ruth! Why?" cried Sylvia, enraptured with this announcement.

"I don't know; that's what it is though, Asylum for Milkmen's Orphans."

Ruth printed the title on the sand before her house, since there was not nearly enough room to inscribe it on the front of the edifice.

"If you're going to call it that"—Lloyd rubbed out Ruth's inscription—"this is the thing." And he printed in place of Ruth's title:

"Lacteal Orphanage."

"I never knew you could be so lovely and silly!" cried Sylvia, delighted.

"You are perfect geese, and that sort of geese are perfect ducks! O'Malley! O'Mal—ley-e-e-ee!" she shrieked. O'Malley, who had been off on a short exploration of his own, came bounding back and piled himself into Sylvia's sand structure on his way to leap upon her.

"Now, only look!" cried Sylvia, laughing, but half annoyed at his destruction.

"Your gentleman who built that house was an Irish landlord, and the Irish folk have arisen against him, because he oppressed them," explained Lloyd. "You'll have to rebuild under the protection of government, Tink. Put down O'Malley's rising, and go ahead."

"Splendid, Lloyd! You do know how to play," cried Sylvia, hugging O'Malley to restore his self-respect; he had been looking mortified since her cry had checked his onslaught. "You couldn't know your missy had gone back to babyhood, and was making sand houses, could you, my brave Irish dragoon? It's all right, O'Malley, dog of the world; we'll begin all over again and build a temple to celebrate the peace."

Like three children these two nearly grown

girls and equally grown boy scooped out the damp sand, piled, shaped, spread it, almost in silence for a long time.

"I believe I'm working in my sleep," said Ruth at last. "Isn't it dreamy here?"

She turned, releasing the cramped elbow upon which she had been resting her weight, half lying, half erect, and as she turned her eyes fell upon the man who had called himself Lindley when the three had met him and his companion before Gabriel Gaby's shack a few days before. He had come over the sand in white canvas, rubber-soled shoes, so quietly that O'Malley had not been aroused from his deep slumber, so it was not strange that mere human ears had not heard his approach.

He smiled and raised the soft linen cap which he wore as Ruth turned and he saw that he was discovered.

"Good afternoon, Miss Bell, Miss Hapgood, Master Hapgood," he said, advancing. "Pray don't move. I am sorry to have you jump up; you made a pretty tableau. Are you forcing time to turn backward in his flight, or are you really younger than I thought you?"

"We were warm and lazy," said Sylvia, assuming a grown-up manner quite foreign to

her, to balance her accounts. "But we were having a good time."

"I'm quite sure of it," returned Mr. Lindley. "May I join you? Thanks. I believe everybody likes to play in the sand. I rather hope, Miss Bell, that you are not quite a little girl. I want to confide in you, to consult you. Will you be so good as to give me a little while, and—if I may be pardoned—alone?"

Sylvia knit her brows, scanning this man's face closely. She decided that she was not afraid of him, but still she did not like him.

"You need not be afraid to talk before the Hapgoods," she said. "I'd ever so much rather they stayed, and they will not repeat anything, any more than I would."

"Cannot you understand, my dear young lady, that there is safety in numbers when it is a question of action, but that there is danger in numbers when it is question of—what shall I say?—mental action, perhaps, is as accurate a term as is prudent? I should prefer to talk to you alone. But"—Mr. Lindley looked hard into first Ruth's, then Lloyd's eyes—"if you insist! Young man, will you give me your word of honour to keep strictly to yourself, mentioning to no one, *to no one*, you under-

stand, not only what I say to you, but that I have spoken with you? And will you, Miss Ruth Hapgood, give the same promise? Miss Bell, you are the person most concerned; it is you whom I desire to approach directly. You will regard it as your duty to keep this entirely to yourself? For a duty it is, my dear young friends!"

"All right," said Lloyd. "I give my word I'll hold my tongue."

"So do I," echoed Ruth.

"I promise," said Sylvia. "But I do not think it's fair to get a promise out of us before we know what it's all about, and especially when none of us wants to know."

Mr. Lindley laughed. "Your point is well taken, Miss Sylvia Bell, but I'm glad to be sure that your sense of honour will secure your silence, however much you inwardly protest," he said.

"Now then," he began, settling himself to his task, nursing one knee and eyeing his audience closely. "No one in this place knows, or must know, who or what I am. I am a detective, and my friend, Edward Gersom, who has joined me here, is also an officer."

He paused to let this information produce

its effect, watching the three faces to see what that effect was. All three pairs of eyes widened and took on a look of alarm. Ruth was considerably shocked, Lloyd was disturbed, yet rather pleased by this amazing statement. Sylvia straightened her boyish shoulders, her whole frame stiffened, she leaned forward slightly, alert, looking ready for instant action, her eyes narrowing, a terrified look dawning within them.

“There has been counterfeit money circulated of late in Boston and New York,” Mr. Lindley went on. “It has been put out this good while, but in small sums, so carefully issued that the government could hardly determine whether it proved an established attempt of important extent, or whether it was what we might call a small private enterprise. Lately the output has increased, the experts have decided that all the bills issued are manufactured in one place, by the same hands, and they have been pretty certainly traced to somewhere along this coast. We have worked it up quietly and, by elimination, have narrowed our field down to this close vicinity. Whoever puts out these bills—fives and tens—has a neat little outfit of tools. He engraves them well; the whole

thing is an excellent piece of counterfeiting. Now this is why I have come to you, to Miss Sylvia Bell. I have done my due amount of inquiring into life here, and on all sides I'm told that 'the Bell girl,' 'Mr. Clement Bell's daughter,' is one who, of all the inhabitants, most goes about in out-of-the-way places, that she is conversant with the countryside as no one else is. Therefore, Miss Bell, I am asking you to help the government, *your* government, if you can. Who is there in this place who is engaged upon secret work? Who is there that seems to hide his work, his manner of life from his neighbours, perhaps from his family? Who is there who is intelligent enough, skillful enough to carry out this counterfeiting to such a successful end? Think!. Do you know of any such person? Any house where such a person might be hidden from observation? If you can help me, you must."

Sylvia's face suddenly looked almost old. Lloyd and Ruth looked at her aghast as Mr. Lindley, also watching her, paused for an answer.

Lines had sprung into her cheeks, drawing down her lips. She was ghastly pale under her coat of tan; her eyes were wild, like a trapped creature's, full of agony.

Yet she answered without hesitation. Her voice was low, she held it down and spoke monotonously, trying to speak steadily, but she did not hesitate. Later Ruth and Lloyd remembered this, and marvelled at her.

“There is a place where a man might hide and do his work,” she said, leaning forward with an earnestness that made her tremble, while her slender hands twisted in and out of each other, their fingers rigid. “More than one man might be there. It is a small, old house. I think no one in the place knows about it, nor how to get to it, but me. I found it. The other day I took Ruth and Lloyd Hapgood there. The door had been opened, the vines had been cut away; the wood was broken; it was still clean.” Sylvia paused, moistened her lips, and went on.

“I have not seen the men there,” she said, speaking as if there surely were men who went there, “but I have not looked for them. I did not know any one was wicked around here; I did not know any one was being hunted here. Of course they would hide if they heard us. I did not look for them. But that is the only house I know about that I don’t know about—I mean everybody knows all about everybody

else here, but that house is hidden away, a secret, tumbledown place. And here is the great thing: there is a cove, with a path down from the house to it, a sort of secret cove, too."

"What of that? Is it important?" asked Mr. Lindley. "My dear girl, don't excite yourself so much; there is absolutely no danger for you in what you are saying."

Sylvia almost groaned. She turned it into a cough, caught her breath and looked more sharply into Mr. Lindley's eyes. Never for an instant did her eyes wander from his face, not a glance did she give to Ruth or Lloyd as she told her story. "Of course it is important," she said. "Don't you see! The counterfeiters have a small, flat-bottomed boat which they pull up and hide by day. At night they get away, out of their hidden cove, with the money, row down to Baytide, that's the largest town near here, on the shore. One of them goes away with the money, the other brings the boat back. Then, when the other wants to come back here, his partner goes out to meet him, the same way he took him off. They couldn't do it if they hadn't a place like that, with a sort of harbour of its own."

Sylvia waited, shaking so that Ruth was frightened. She made a move toward her, but, without looking at her, nor moving her eyes from their anxious observation of Mr. Lindley, Sylvia checked Ruth by a motion of her hand.

She waited for a comment from her hearer, trembling, tense. Mr. Lindley seemed to go over what he had heard, then his face brightened, he laughed and slapped his leg emphatically. Sylvia swayed, her eyes closed, she gasped.

But instantly she righted herself and resumed her watchful gaze on Mr. Lindley.

It was easy to see that she felt for an instant immense relief that he had found her story acceptable.

"By Jove, Miss Sylvia Bell, I do believe you've solved it!" he cried. "We haven't found a single place that promised any result. We did not know about this house you describe. It sounds probable. At least we must investigate it. Will you take us to it?"

Sylvia nodded. "When?" she said by a visible effort.

"Are you ill, my dear child?" asked Mr. Lindley, with genuine solicitude. "You seem to be suffering."

Sylvia shook her head. "I'm all right," she managed to say. "It's been warm. I'm a little scared, that's all. We don't have wicked people here usually." She smiled, but it was a smile that was most unsmiling.

"Nothing whatever to frighten you," Mr. Lindley once more assured her. "You don't strike me as the frightened sort. Captain Sylvia, they all call you here, you know. Now, Captain Sylvia, as to when—when to visit that house, I mean, of course. Would there still be time this afternoon?"

"I'm afraid not," said Sylvia.

"To-morrow morning, then? Say we make it to-morrow morning. I could hardly get Gersom and put it through this afternoon. To-morrow at half past eight! Or still earlier would be better?" Mr. Lindley was eager.

"Late in the afternoon, please," said Sylvia decidedly. "I can't go till then."

Mr. Lindley frowned. "Don't like delays," he said. "We've had enough of them while we were trying to get a clue. If these criminals escape, Miss Sylvia, through delay on our part after we had a suspicion of their whereabouts, it would be a bad business for us."

"Oh, but they couldn't get away in day-

light," said Sylvia eagerly. "It would be in the night; it would have to be. I couldn't possibly take you to that house till afternoon, and Lloyd and Ruth couldn't show you the way. The men can't escape in daylight. Sorry, but there's something else I can't possibly, *possibly* put off doing in the morning."

"Very well, the afternoon be it," Mr. Lindley reluctantly assented, and again Sylvia seemed to betray relief.

"I won't detain you any longer, Miss Bell—Captain Sylvia and her Crew! I am deeply indebted to you. I have great hopes of your having helped me beyond my highest expectations. Shall we meet here to-morrow, at, say, four o'clock?"

"Yes," said Sylvia. "You're welcome."

Ruth looked frightened; Sylvia did not seem to her to be fully aware of what she said, but Mr. Lindley and Lloyd laughed.

"I'll have to inform the village that its Captain Sylvia, who fears no gale, is dreadfully alarmed by a glimpse of the Hand of the Law. But I won't tell them till we've bagged our game," Mr. Lindley said, rising, bowing and going off down the beach.

Sylvia sat quite still, watching him depart.

She had clasped her hands tensely, her face as all her body twitched with nervous contraction of the muscles. When he had entirely disappeared, around the final turn which shut him from sight, Sylvia threw herself on her face, digging her fingers down into the sand, and cried with such heart-broken abandon that Ruth and Lloyd looked on aghast, feeling helpless against such a tempest of grief.

O'Malley did more than they could, more than any human being could. He came over to his mistress, insinuated his long nose beneath her face in the sand, nibbled her hands, poked her lovingly, whining the while to beg her to consider the pain she inflicted upon him by crying in this way, and at last lay down with his head on her head, sobbing himself because he could not comfort her.

Sylvia's arm stole around O'Malley's neck, her sobs abated, she moved closer to him with a pitiful little moan and then lay quiet.

Lloyd and Ruth looked at each other, miserable, quite in the dark as to the cause of Sylvia's unhappiness, or what was their proper course to pursue.

"Can't you do anything?" Lloyd whispered into Ruth's ear.

Ruth moved uncertainly toward Sylvia, but before she could carry out her intention to take her in her arms and beg her to tell them what was wrong, Sylvia sprang to her feet.

"Queer how—how nervous this makes me," she said tremulously, with a twist of her lips that was meant for a smile. "I'm not a cry-baby, honestly; I don't often cry. It made me nervous. Don't mind. I've got to go home; I've got to go right home, quick. I don't believe I can take you sailing to-morrow, Ruth, Lloyd, after all. You see—you see this house business will be on my mind. I've got things—things to do. Will you let me off? I'll take you the first day I can. If—if nothing happens—happens—I'll go soon. Please don't be offended. Let me off now— And—and—good-bye, Ruth, Lloyd. I must go—home!"

Sylvia darted off up the steep path like a deer, but Ruth and Lloyd, watching her, saw her stagger and catch at a branch for support a little way up.

It was not like Sylvia to stammer, repeat her words. She looked half crazed with—what? Was it pain, or fear, or both? And how gallantly she tried to play her part! How bravely she tried to hide her misery and to bear it alone.

What could be wrong? Ruth and Lloyd felt that without unkindness, nor lack of friendliness, they were pushed away, and that Sylvia closed upon herself a door behind which she hid the cause of her pain, and herself with it.

"What in all the world—" Lloyd said slowly, more and more puzzled.

But Ruth looked at him, her eyes hardly less frightened than Sylvia's had been.

"Lloyd, I know! I see. Oh, why didn't we both see at once?" she cried. "Don't you know this all fits her father—the description of what the counterfeiters must be like—and it fits no one else? We said that the other day, but we didn't think anything about it when we said it. Poor, poor, darling Sylvia! She looks so frightened! She told the detective about the old house because she is so afraid it is not in that house that they hide! Oh, I see, I see now! Poor Sylvia! Lloyd, can it be he, her father? Oh, Lloyd, can it be?"

"Good gracious, how do I know?" growled Lloyd, kicking the shell of a "horseshoe" viciously. "If it is, then we've got to stand by, that's all. Jiminy Christmas, and such a girl!"

"Stand by!" cried Ruth indignantly. "What else could we do? But it won't be standing *by*;

it will be standing right inside with her—if she'll let us. I'll make her come home with me, if—Lloyd, would he go to—to *prison*?"

"States prison, counterfeiting," Lloyd said furiously. "Ruth, won't you please shut up? Sylvia Bell, Tinker Bell's father! Gee! Come on home. Oh, confound it; we can't even talk to Aunt Helen about it! Come on home. Don't you dare hint a word of it to me again to-night. I've heard all I want to now. Captain Sylvia! Say, it isn't so! He isn't the man. Stands to reason he isn't. How'd a counterfeiter have such a girl as that for his daughter? It's all right, Ruth; you'll see."

And Lloyd marched off in a towering wrath with the world in general, born of his unendurable pity. Ruth meekly followed him, much more comforted by Lloyd's professed faith than he was himself.

CHAPTER XII

STORMY WATERS

"Miss Sylvia, I'm glad you've come," said Cassandra Billings, meeting Sylvia in the hall. "I've been tryin' to get a chance to teach you how to make the pop-overs you're so crazy about. I'm goin' to do it this afternoon, for tea. Come right out to the kitchen soon's you've got ready to go to work."

"Pop-overs!" Sylvia exclaimed. "No indeed, Cassie; not to-night."

She brushed Cassandra aside and ran up the stairs. Cassandra caught a glimpse of her face and stood motionless, looking after the girl. Then she aroused and went to the door looking out on the piazza.

"He's out there asleep. 'Tisn't O'Malley," she said aloud. "What under the sun— But Sylvia's an awful high-strung child, takes things to heart more'n anybody'd ever surmise, just seein' her independent outside ways. Must be she's had some kind of fuss with those Hapgoods. I declare, seem's if there was a reg'lar

bewitchment on her gettin' learned to cook! Do my best, I can't get hold of her, and my own time, and the suitable state of things in the house, all together."

Sylvia had fallen, face down, upon her bed. She lay motionless for a while, then she turned her face toward the window, and stared into the branches of a tree that shaded it. She was not crying, but her smooth brow was drawn into deep lines, her eyes were full of bleak misery, her lips compressed and drooping.

It was not the "Captain Sylvia" of *The Wallowing Window Blind* who lay there, the care-free, graceful, beautiful and daring girl of that morning, but a girl growing by leaps into womanhood, tasting the bitterest draught that life has to offer—danger and disgrace to the one best beloved which she was powerless to avert, or to lighten.

"Well!" Sylvia sighed at last, and arose slowly.

She dressed herself for tea carefully; she wanted to look her best to meet her father. But when the task was accomplished, she scanned herself with a disapproving shake of her head. Her swollen lids, the pallor below her brown tint, the dull unhappiness in her

eyes robbed her of her charm. She looked her worst, not her best.

"Oh, well, I never did believe much in the heroines of stories who look lovely when they've been crying their hearts out, and going through horrible things," Sylvia thought with the least ghost of a smile.

It seemed to the girl that her father was more than ordinarily preoccupied that night at tea. He laid several narrow strips of paper, covered with notes, on the table beside him and went over them as he ate, slipping one below the others as he finished with it, sometimes making a marginal note upon one, by way of memorandum. Once he consulted his watch, an unusual thing for Mr. Bell to do, who was considered by his household to be unconscious of time's connection with any event.

Sylvia did not eat, she could hardly make a pretense of eating, she was so feverishly impatient for the meal to end, so anxious lest she could not secure her father for the talk that she must have with him at once.

At last Mr. Bell gathered up his papers, crushed his napkin and laid it beside his plate, pushed back his chair and, for the first time, looked at Sylvia.

"My dear, you have not eaten. You do not look well. Is there anything wrong?" he asked.

"Father, I want to talk to you," Sylvia said, instantly falling into a sort of nervous ague as she arose and went around to him.

"Not to-night, Sylvia. I am pressed for time. Is it necessary?" Mr. Bell added as he noted his little girl's agitation: "Why are you trembling? Sylvia, what is the matter?"

"Please, just a few moments. Did I ever in all my life ask you to let me talk to you before? Please, please, a few moments, on the piazza, father," she begged.

"Very few, then," Mr. Bell yielded the point, his watch in his hand, and preceded Sylvia to the piazza, where O'Malley welcomed them, and was amazed to find that Sylvia did not so much as see him.

"Father, I have been told something which I had to promise not to tell any one, but it is right—I must tell you," Sylvia began.

"A promise of that sort must not be broken," Mr. Bell interposed.

"Yes, this time," Sylvia insisted, finding speech so hard that her father regarded her with growing wonder. "I must. It is my duty to tell you. I did not know what I was

going to hear when I gave that promise. Father, father, father! You are more than any promise, you are first!" Sylvia almost screamed, and caught her hands in a rigid clasp, fighting down her emotion.

"Some one has been making counterfeit money here," the poor girl went on, lowering her eyes, sinking her head upon her breast that she might not see her father's face. "Officers are here to—to find him. They asked me where a man might be whom they described. He had an exact idea of the sort of man it was, how the man worked. He asked me because I am always poking about everywhere. I said officers; only one of them came to talk to me; it was this afternoon. I told him something that they—he, I mean. I can't tell you clearly; never mind! I told Mr. Lindley something that he thought might lead to catching this man. So they won't do a single thing till to-morrow afternoon. Then I'm to show them the way. Father, do you see? That gives the man a chance to get away to-night if he knows they are trying to get him. That's why I told them about the old tumble-down house, and left it till to-morrow afternoon to take them there. Father, do you see? There's time! He

could get away—to-night! Father, father, father, dear, dearest, dearest always, anyway, do you see?”

Sylvia's voice failed her as she reached this end. She stood swaying before her father, never raising her ashamed, suffering face, her hands twisting and pulling at each other pitifully.

“I certainly do not see by what right this man came to you about the affair, Sylvia,” said Mr. Bell. “Extraordinary to approach a child like you, under whatever pretext, in connection with criminal detective work. I am bound to tell you that no sentiment of pity justifies you in trying to help this criminal, to give him time to escape, since you have been asked to throw light on the possible lairs in this neighbourhood. It is natural, commendable, that you should want to spare him, but it is sometimes weakness to yield to pity, however praiseworthy the impulse. If the criminal knows that he has time to escape, as you say, he can do so, and of course has a right to do so. But you should not try to defeat justice, since these ill-advised officers of the law appealed to you. I am truly annoyed to see you so disturbed. Calm yourself, my child. There

is not any danger to you, nor should you take this affair so to heart. Still, I am angry with this person for talking to a little girl, and to my little girl in particular."

"Oh, but they did not think—" Sylvia began hastily, then checked herself.

"I hope that you will go to bed and sleep peacefully. Don't allow this to annoy you. I am going to Boston to-night—" Mr. Bell got no further.

With a rapturous cry Sylvia threw her arms around him and began to sob.

"Oh, father, father, father! You do understand me, you do! I thought you didn't, I thought you didn't! Oh, I will go to sleep in peace, I will! I won't worry, I'll fight not to! Oh, father, father, father, I'm so glad you understand me," she sobbed

"There, there, my dear! I do not approve of emotional outbreaks. Why should I not understand you? Are you not my one little girl? Good night, my dear. I am leaving on the last train, and have final preparations to make. You were right to come to me with your troublesome story, of course. I am glad that you did so. Good night." Mr. Bell patted Sylvia's head and pushed her gently from him.

"Good-bye, father. Good-bye. You will tell me what I am to do?" gasped Sylvia, turning, if possible, paler than before.

"My good little daughter! So anxious to please me always!" Mr. Bell smiled at Sylvia with new warmth. "Just now I want you to go to sleep early and awake refreshed and calm. Surely I will let you know what I want you to do, my dear, as I see it myself. Just now there is nothing for you to do but to go on in your usual way. Good night, good night, good little Sylvia."

"Oh, he's gone, he's gone! I'm so thankful! I sent him, I did it, just me, O'Malley! It's almost as if I were his faithful watch dog, like you, O'Malley!" Sylvia cried, dropping down in a little heap of quivering relief and sorrow over O'Malley's upraised head as he lay on the piazza rug.

The next morning Sylvia did awake rested and refreshed. She had gone to bed early and had fallen asleep at once, utterly worn out, yet soothed by the knowledge that her father was speeding away on the train, and that she was carrying out the one desire that he had expressed for her.

It was an unspeakable relief to see her father's

chair vacant at breakfast, although her eyes filled with tears and she choked as she looked at it.

Cassandra showed no consciousness of anything unusual afoot, though she glanced sharply at Sylvia's altered face several times when Sylvia did not see her.

Sylvia's breakfast was a slight one; she could not force herself to eat, nevertheless she looked and felt lighter-hearted than she had the night before.

When the forenoon was half over—and its moments crawled slowly past Sylvia waiting for her afternoon appointment—Lloyd Hapgood came up the walk. Sylvia saw him coming and went to meet him.

"Hallo, Tink," said Lloyd, trying to speak carelessly and making a dismal failure of it.

"I came to see if you didn't want company up to that old house this afternoon, company besides those detectives? Ruth says she can't go. She says she couldn't stand it; Ruth's kind of a scared little thing, you know, and she's jumpy about Lindley and Gersom. I'll go with you if you want me to. Don't mind saying so if you'd rather not. I wouldn't mind a bit, but if you want me, I'm your man."

"Indeed I do want you, Lloyd," Sylvia cried. "I hated to go alone, but I didn't like to ask you, or Ruth, to go. I knew Ruth would be nervous about going. You're a trump, Lloyd; I'm grateful, honestly, not just a say so."

"Piffle!" said Lloyd scornfully. "Any fellow'd want to see the game; nothing to be grateful for, Tink. All right then; I'll meet you on the beach."

"You know, Lloyd, I don't know anything more about that house than you do, I haven't seen any one there, but I didn't tell Mr. Lindley that I had, you know," Sylvia reminded Lloyd, anxious to keep his mind clear of confusion as to the extent of her misleading the detectives. "I said that was the only house around—if it is a house, still—that every one didn't know about. It could be used by any one as I said it could, but I didn't tell them it was, did I?"

"Sure not, Tink," said Lloyd. "You're all right. Don't worry; nothing about it to worry you. If they don't catch their men up there, it isn't your fault; if they do it's thanks to you. So you're on top however the cat jumps."

Sylvia gave Lloyd a look which he pretended not to see, a look of anxious protest.

"I don't know, Lloyd, I don't know," she sighed.

"I know, and that's enough," Lloyd said. "You sure are all right, Captain Sylvia Tinker Bell! Does it bother your family to have you mixed up in this?"

"Cassandra would probably have a long chain of fits if she knew about it, but she doesn't. Father went away last night." Sylvia spoke with elaborate carelessness.

Lloyd could not prevent the start with which he heard this statement. He blushed painfully, turning dark red up into the roots of his hair, but he made no direct comment.

"So long," he said, turning away somewhat abruptly. "I'll be on hand at that same place on the beach. You're—you're distinctly *it*, Sylvia Bell."

With which indirect tribute to her prompt skill in getting her father out of the way, Lloyd left her.

Now that her father had gone away, and there was no longer a reason for setting out on her dreaded trip to the old house, Sylvia was impatient to be off and on the way to getting through with it. She went down to the beach before the appointed time and found

Lloyd, impatient like herself, already there. To the relief of them both, Mr. Lindley and his companion, Gersom, turned up at the rendezvous a good half hour before they were due.

The manner of both men was distinctly different from their old one. The somewhat elaborate politeness of Lindley toward Sylvia had disappeared; in its place was a crisp, businesslike offhandedness that stood for complete absorption in the affair upon which they were engaged.

"Glad to find you here," Lindley said. "Does the boy go with us? Very good. All ready to start? Lead on, Miss Sylvia. Can you keep back the dog when you get to the place? It won't do to have him running on to give an alarm."

"O'Malley will walk close, or heel, whenever I tell him to," said Sylvia.

She felt suddenly overwhelmed with shame. She was leading these men upon a clue in which she herself felt less than no faith, and they were trusting her, believing it quite possible that they were about to capture the offenders through her agency. It sickened her thus to receive undeserved trust, yet no actual wrong would be done these detectives, and,

in the meantime, her father was going farther and farther from them. Sylvia stiffened her resolution, her courage and self-justification, and turned to take the first steps toward the goal.

Two passages through the tangled undergrowth of the unused path to the old house had somewhat lightened its difficulties. Lloyd's hatchet on his first visit had cut off some of the most intrusive brambles. Yet the path was still beset with hardships.

Lindley and Gersom grumbled softly under their breath when long briar arms swept across their faces.

"I'm inclined to believe with you, Miss Bell, that these unknown friends of ours leave the house by the cove, if they use it for their business," Lindley said into Sylvia's ear as, at the same time, he protected it from a menaced wound. "Are we near it yet?"

"Quite near," Sylvia said. "O'Malley, heel! Keep back."

"Wait a moment," said Lindley, halting and putting his hand into his breast pocket. "Master Lloyd, we never know what we may come up against in our business. We are armed, Gersom and I. Take this revolver, or—can you shoot?"

"Yes, pretty decently," said Lloyd.

"Take this revolver then, and put it in your pocket. We may find more than two men, and it's certain we'll find them provided for defence. Draw if I give the word, not otherwise. Miss Sylvia, when you've come far enough for us to make out the rest of the way, go back. I don't want you, I can't allow you to go on."

Lindley issued his orders in such wise that Lloyd, although he perfectly well knew that the suggestion of the old house as a criminal's possible lair had come solely from Sylvia's desire to gain time for her father to escape, still felt the thrill of a great adventure, spiced with romance and danger.

Sylvia flushed painfully. All this, and the kind protection of herself, and not the least chance of either danger, or success, for the detectives!

"I'm not afraid to go on," she said. "I'd rather, much rather."

"Can't consent," Lindley said curtly. "Silence, now!"

They went on in single file, moving carefully, not speaking. It was exciting; like Lloyd, Sylvia felt almost persuaded that there was real adventure ahead.

Thus they came on toward the house, which at last was in sight, cowering beneath its brambles, falling apart and bending downward as if it really were the shelter of wrong which it tried to hide.

Nothing more was said of Sylvia's leaving the party; the two detectives forgot it. Lloyd and Sylvia herself were only too sure there was no reason for it.

Lindley made a motion to her now to keep back, however, and pulled Lloyd by the sleeve, signifying by pantomime that he and Gersom would go on alone to reconnoitre.

Sylvia shrank close to Lloyd and was comforted when he drew her hand through his arm; she held O'Malley's collar, finding support in his companionship, also.

The two men went cautiously up to the house. Sylvia and Lloyd saw them go around it, after having looked into the windows on the side nearest to them, always with the utmost caution.

They were gone for more than twenty minutes, Sylvia and Lloyd were getting both nervous and weary over this delay, when they came in sight, emerging from the back, under the lean-to roof's low edge, and came toward the waiting girl and boy.

"Oh, me, I hate it!" Sylvia groaned involuntarily.

Lindley heard her voice, though not her words, and raised his hand to his lips in warning signal for silence. Then he came on rapidly.

He took Sylvia and Lloyd by the shoulders and bent his head between both of theirs.

"Men are out somewhere, but the plant is all there. We've got to wait till they come in and nab 'em," he whispered.

"What!" cried Sylvia, and instantly Lindley's hand covered her lips.

"Here? The counterfeiters' plant here? You've found 'em?" gasped Lloyd, but not above his breath.

Lindley nodded hard. "All right-o!" he whispered. "Plant, tools and all, down cellar, fine outfit, windows darkened, work by lamp-light. We're going back to wait till they come back. Miss Sylvia, go home, please. Lloyd, come with us. When the men turn up we'll cover 'em with our revolvers before they can get out theirs. Dead easy, a cinch. Go home, Miss Sylvia; we'll see you afterward to tell you how grateful we are. Go home now."

"No," said Sylvia, in a whisper which yet conveyed her determined will.

"I'm going to see it out. I couldn't get home alone."

Lindley glanced at her. It was evident that she was suffering under the strongest excitement. She was so pale, she trembled so, that Lindley decided that it might be the less of evils to allow her to stay under their care.

"All right; you've earned the right to choose," he said. "Come on. Don't let that dog bark. He's no business here, anyway."

"He won't bark!" whispered Sylvia indignantly, helped by this aspersion upon O'Malley. "He knows what I want, and he always does it."

So the curious little band, brought to the right goal by such a singular chance theory, went silently, carefully up to the tumble-down house.

Lindley opened the front door; it swung crazily upon its loose hinges.

"Go through, in yonder; at least you shall not stay here," Lindley whispered, pushing Sylvia through to the rear.

He put Lloyd, pistol in hand and quivering with excitement that almost overpowered him, just within what had once been the living room of the house, and which commanded the en-

trance. Lindley himself and Gersom stood in the musty four-by-six entry. They held their pistols in their hands, their bodies were tense, their eyes alert; there was no mistaking the joy of the hunter, keen upon a close trail, with which they listened and watched.

And thus the party waited the coming of the counterfeiters.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SEINE

Lloyd heard O'Malley growl. Instantly the growl was cut off before it became loud enough to be audible at a distance. Lloyd knew that Sylvia had clasped her dog's nose and silenced him. He also knew that the time had come, that O'Malley's quicker hearing had distinguished steps not yet audible to human ears.

He stiffened himself, still wondering while he leaned forward, ready for what was to follow, that Sylvia's imaginings were coming true.

Lindley and Gersom simultaneously made a slight gesture of warning to each other and to Lloyd. They stood directly before the door, revolvers pointed at it.

Some one came up the two broken steps outside, a hand touched the door latch. Instantly Gersom threw it open wide, and the two men on the inside faced and covered with their arms two other men standing on the outside.

"Hands up!" ordered Lindley. "You are arrested."

The surprise was complete. One of the men half turned, his instinct being to fly. The other made a motion toward his hip pocket.

"Not much!" said Gersom, to the first one, and his short-muzzle revolver enforced his prohibition.

"Stop! Move, and you're dead," said Lindley to the second one, and the hand came back and dropped at his side.

"I guess the game's up," observed one of the prisoners.

"Great head. So it is," agreed Lindley.

"You won't need any money, genuine, or counterfeit, for many a long day. You are coming with us. We'll move your house furnishings later, after you're settled for the night. Lloyd, come here and take these chaps' artillery away from them. I'll cover them, Gersom and I."

Lloyd joined the group. Neither of the counterfeiters was above thirty years old. One was undersized, thin, dark, with a blue-black growth of several days upon his pointed face. His black eyes were restless; cunning and greed marked his face. He bore the stamp of the human rat that works by dark and below ground.

The other was a head taller, being unusually tall and heavy-built. He had high cheek bones, a broad nose, heavy jaw, was light-haired, with light blue eyes. He looked, and was, the leading spirit of this nefarious enterprise, daring, strong-willed, clever, with the sort of cleverness that expends more time and talent upon deeds that must eventually lead to ruin, than would be required to attain honest and permanent success in life.

Lloyd could not keep his hands from shaking as he came up with this pair and obediently went through their pockets to find and take from them any weapons which they might have.

"Look out! Keep down and out of the direct range of our guns; stand to one side," commanded Lindley sharply. "Don't get in the way if we have to shoot."

Which order did not soothe Lloyd's nerves, though he heard and obeyed it.

"That's all," Lindley added, as Lloyd went through pocket after pocket on both men, turning them wrong side out and leaving them so. He produced a longer and a shorter muzzle revolver from both prisoners' clothes, an ugly curved knife from the big man, a long, slender, wicked bladed knife from the small, thin one.

"Queer how often men pick out tools that seem to match up with themselves," observed Lindley, and Lloyd instantly saw the resemblance between the little man and his knife.

"Now about going down to the village. We'll take these fellows to Boston to-night, and we've got to get them down from here. That's a mean path, especially for that purpose and this party," said Lindley.

"If you'll call this party off, there'll be a lot in it for you. Any use in talkin' it over? We'll do better for you than whoever you're workin' for; gov'ment, I s'pose?" said the big man.

"No sort of use, my husky blond friend," returned Lindley cheerfully. "We weren't taking you on as a sort of speculation. You're right; we are working for Uncle Sam, and we don't happen to care to do him a trick, nor to stand in with you. Of course we appreciate your offer!"

"You know Sylvia said they must come and go by boat, through that inlet she was talking about," said Lloyd in Lindley's ear.

"By Jove! Captain Sylvia! I clean forgot her!" cried Lindley. "I wonder if she's fainted or anything. Go in there and see, will you, Lloyd?"

Do you mean we could get our haul down in their own boat? Can you sail her? We can't. Does the tide serve now? Do you suppose that plucky girl would handle the boat for us? I'd hate to ask her!"

"I'll find out what she's doing; I mean how she's feeling. As to pluck, I don't believe there's any end to hers. She's done more in these past two days than sail these prisoners down the coast," said Lloyd going toward the rear of the house.

He found Sylvia with her ear leaned close against the door, which she had unwillingly closed behind her. She held O'Malley by the collar, one hand clasping his nose. She looked beside herself, her face crimson, her eyes snapping with excitement, fear, joy, a thousand emotions, thrilling her with each passing moment. Sylvia clutched Lloyd when he appeared. O'Malley took advantage of his freedom to bark madly, venting his own pent-up emotions.

"Never mind, let him," Lloyd advised Sylvia. "He can't do any harm now they're caught, if he barks all night."

"Lloyd, Lloyd, was there ever such a thing happened anywhere?" cried Sylvia. "I never dreamed, never once dreamed when I told

them how this house might be used that it was used so! Never! Lloyd, I thought a fearful, fearful thing! How could I? I thought they meant father, my father! Oh, Lloyd, I died, I *died*, when I thought that! The disgrace, the horrible, horrible disgrace! And my own dear father, I was so proud of him! And I made him go away—I don't see now why he did go. For he did not know, he did not even know! Oh, Lloyd, think of it! I felt it must be he! It couldn't be, yet it was! Oh, how awful, awful!"

Sylvia shuddered and Lloyd patted her back soothingly.

"Ruth and I knew what you were thinking. We didn't see how it could be any one else. Don't think of it any more; forget it, Tink, you brick!" said Lloyd. "See here, brace up; you're needed."

He could not have said anything better. Sylvia responded like a fine horse to a touch on his bridle, like her own beloved boat to the lightest hand on her tiller.

"How am I needed?" she asked, drawing the back of her hand across her eyes and visibly bracing herself.

"Mr. Lindley doesn't like to try taking his

prisoners down that narrow, winding, brambly path. Does the tide serve now for getting out of the inlet? They must have a boat, just as you said. Would you sail it, take the whole show down to the village? Lindley said they were going to Boston to-night. How about it, Tink? Are you game to finish your capture and sail the boat? Mr. Lindley hated to ask you, but I didn't. I know you're the stuff."

"Course I'll do it," said Sylvia promptly. "Tide's all right, high at six to-night," she glanced at her wrist watch in its leathern strap. "It's now nearly five. Come on, Lloyd. We'll tell Mr. Lindley I'll do it, then we'll take a look at the boat."

"Hurrah for Captain Sylvia!" cried Mr. Lindley when Sylvia and Lloyd came back to him and made their announcement. "It really will be a perfectly safe trip, but you mustn't mind weapons. Girls do, as a rule; I shouldn't take you for that sort. We'll have to keep our prisoners covered, but because we do you will be safe. It's fine of you to agree to do this."

"Seems to me I must," said Sylvia, with a faint smile. She had kept close to Lloyd, not liking her proximity to criminals.

"And yet I thought my own father must be one!" she thought, as she and Lloyd went out the door

They found the boat pulled well up upon the bank of the inlet, half hidden by low branches and by the brownish colour of her paint, which made her unnoticeable amid the tree trunks to a casual passer-by.

She was the sort of boat that Sylvia's experience had expected to find, a flat-bottomed craft which drew no depth of water. She was rigged with both mast and a small sail, and oars. She was very small; there was the main trouble with her for her present use.

"She'll tip over as sure as fate, if so many get into her and don't sit quiet," said Sylvia. "If those two men are halfway awake they ought to know this, and they might tip us over and try to get away, swimming, don't you see?"

"What, then, can be done?" asked Lloyd.

"Mr. Lindley 'd better let me go down and bring up my boat. It will take longer, but not too long, the wind's right. It's much the safer way," suggested Sylvia.

"Then we've got to cut back, and tell him," said Lloyd, starting up as he spoke.

Mr. Lindley, taken aside to be told this while Lloyd replaced him on guard with his revolver beside Mr. Gersom, agreed to Sylvia's reasoning.

"You know more about boats, keel, centre-board and flat-bottom, than I do, though that's not a specially strong statement," he said. "It's a shame to make you do all this work. You've been at the bottom of our success, and now you're doing the work of conveying the prisoners. Too bad, a girl like you!"

For the first time since the shock of the horrible certainty that it was her father whom these men had come to capture, Sylvia laughed in much her old manner.

"I suppose it takes a girl like me; the other kind of girl doesn't sail a boat!" she said. "I'll be as quick as I can be, Mr. Lindley. Let me take this boat here, and can you spare Lloyd? Then we'd each row an oar and make better time. We can't sail down, wind is the other way, and it would be poking. But I can come up fast in my own boat, when I get started."

"I'll leave it to you, Captain Sylvia," said Mr. Lindley.

"Then will you have the men down at the inlet when I get here? About an hour, I sup-

pose I'll need," said Sylvia, and she and Lloyd and O'Malley rushed off madly on their errand.

"Feels queer to be working for government, helping the law, doesn't it, Tink?" asked Lloyd, shipping his oar and getting down to hard rowing, after he and Sylvia had poled out of the inlet.

"I don't know how it doesn't feel, the whole thing, Lloyd," Sylvia answered. "I shall not know for a long, long time. As near as I can tell I feel the way I did when I was sick and out of my head, once, long time ago. It seems to me we're delirious."

"Must be a contagious disease; same here," said Lloyd. "But it's the craziest ever, beats any delirium, to make up such a yarn as you did, and find it right, down to the very shape of this old tub we're in this minute!"

Sylvia took upon herself the steering of their awkward craft, and they rowed directly to *The Walloping Window Blind's* moorings.

They made the flat-bottomed boat fast astern the larger boat, hoisted sail quickly, and were off, keeping up pretty well toward shore with a favorable wind and tide.

"Lloyd, you'd better row in and get our passengers. I'll stand in around the inlet,

but you see I can't anchor. So you bring them out in the prisoners' boat, and I'll luff up to let you board me when you come out. I don't want to risk going into the cove; it would be a bad thing to get stuck in there," said Sylvia.

"Aye, aye, Captain Sylvia," Lloyd properly responded, pulling the front of his cap in what he hoped was true jackie fashion.

Lloyd was glad that Sylvia had not come in after her load. The small man made resistance. He had broken a handcuff and he had to be forced into obedience with Lindley's revolver held close to his head. It looked for a few minutes as if they were going to be compelled to bring off one living and one dead man, or, at the best, one seriously wounded. But the rebel gave in at the last moment, seeing that his captors would not hesitate to carry out their threats, and the flat boat brought out to *The Walloping Window Blind* both counterfeiters uninjured, and the two officers, each holding a revolver ready, finger on trigger. Lloyd was thankful that Sylvia had escaped the extremely bad prelude to this embarkation.

Sylvia brought the boat about and the prisoners were shipped without mishap or further

demur. The detectives put their prisoners down on the bottom of the boat and themselves sat over them, occupying the seat that ran along the taffrail. Lindley produced two pairs of new handcuffs and fastened again the wrists of both men.

"No use in letting you repeat your performance of when we started," he remarked. "This way you'll be easier, for temptation will be removed."

It was a nervous and exceedingly quiet Sylvia who sat in the stern, sailing down the bay, tacking on short tacks toward her moorings. With all her might she tried to detach her mind from whom she carried, and to fasten her thoughts upon the work which was her duty now to do. But she found herself tired, suddenly, almost beyond bearing. Her nerves had been strained to breaking point. It was the last, hardest demand of this hard day, to sit in the stern of her beloved boat and not dwell on the ugly spectacle of two manacled men before her.

"I wonder whether I shall ever, ever be rested and feel as I used to feel? I wonder whether I am really Sylvia Bell?" she thought. "But father, father! He's my same glorious, honour-

able, great father! I must keep thinking of that, only of that!"

O'Malley came down the boat, walking gingerly outside the taffrail, as if he wished to avoid the contagion of criminal propinquity. He growled as he came, wrinkling his nose and showing all his young white teeth. He came close to Sylvia and sat down on one of her feet.

"You dear!" she cried. "I suppose it is a case for a chaperon!" O'Malley's clearly conveyed opinion of her surroundings made her laugh and feel better.

"Shall we all go in at once, or make two trips?" asked Mr. Lindley.

"We can't do it in one trip, can we?" Sylvia said. "No. Lloyd, will you come back for me? I'd rather stay and furl after you're all gone."

"Then good night, Captain Sylvia," said Mr. Lindley, taking off his hat with his left hand, but keeping his right one still at its post. "I'll try to thank you another time, and see that you are thanked by those higher up. You've done a big service to the government. You're a wonderful girl."

Sylvia turned on him swiftly. This was more than either her honesty or her overstrained nerves could stand.

"I didn't know these men were there, I didn't mean to help. I won't ever be thanked, I don't deserve it. Lloyd, tell Mr. Lindley about it. Good-bye, Mr. Lindley. I've got all the reward I want; I'm gladder than you could be. Don't ever say a word about it to me, please, please! I'd give anything to forget all about it," Sylvia almost sobbed.

"She's a tired little Captain Sylvia," said Mr. Lindley, with the greatest kindness. "She's a great little big woman, all the same! Good night, Captain Sylvia. Get rested, and don't be sorry these felons are caught; it's a mighty good job."

Lloyd came back for Sylvia and found her tying the last knots in her ropes, the palest, most worn-out Sylvia imaginable, looking like a little girl, her older side quite out of sight.

He helped her down into the rowboat and she willingly let him, and took her seat as passenger without a demur.

Lloyd was sensible enough to let her alone. He did not speak till he had beached the boat. Then he asked:

"Shall I go home with you, Tink? If not, don't wait; I'll pull the boat up and tie her. Go on home and go to bed; that's my advice."

"All right, Lloyd. Thank you lots! You've stood by me like a trump. Tell Ruth all about it. I'm only dog-tired—worse! O'Malley doesn't seem tired at all!"

Sylvia waved her hand several times as she walked along the beach toward her home, to show Lloyd that there was nothing for him to worry about.

Indeed as she walked she began to feel better. The strain of being with the captives, of playing her part and doing her duty, being removed, she gradually felt rested, and her spirits rose as she realised fully that her fear of its being her father who had been under suspicion was groundless.

She began to sing as she walked, and O'Malley, feeling the rise of her mental barometer, frisked ahead of her, catching up driftwood sticks and tossing them about, worrying seaweed and rags which had washed ashore, behaving in all ways like a dog who knew that the worst was not merely over, but had never been true.

When Sylvia came opposite to Gabriel Gaby's shack he was not in sight. Mate was enjoying the declining sun, seated outside the door; Sylvia knew that Gabriel was at supper.

"Gabriel Gaby, I'm coming in," she called.

"I don't know why you wouldn't," responded Gabriel, instantly appearing, knife in hand and somewhat shining about the lips. "I'm havin' some fried perch an' fried potatoes for supper. Come in, or would you rather stay out here?"

"I wouldn't keep you from supper for anything, and I'd like to sit down," Sylvia said, and they both went in.

The house consisted of one room. The other rooms lacking were indicated by the stove in one corner, a cot in another, a large chair in a third. Thus the suggestion of kitchen, bedroom and drawing room was delicately made.

Mate had flown into the house on O'Malley's appearance and now sat on the back of the tall rocker. Sylvia dropped into the chair and lifted Mate down upon her lap, disregarding O'Malley's whining protest.

"You look kinder beat out, Sylvie, now I come to look at you," said Gabriel, pausing, his body bent to sit down, but delaying the actual action. "Don't seem 's if I'd ever seen you look tired before. I guess I'll make you a cup o' tea; no trouble; I'm goin' to have one myself," he added, anticipating an objection.

"I don't drink tea. Perhaps it would do me

good, thank you, Gabriel," said Sylvia. "Look here, Gabriel Gaby, you'd be tired if you were I! Listen to what has happened." And Sylvia began the story of the preceding day and of that afternoon.

Gabriel stood listening enthralled, holding his brown stone teapot in one hand and a tin tea caddy in the other.

Sylvia poured out her tale as she would not have done to any one else. She had loved this queer little stranded old sailor all her life, and she did not mind his knowing how she had suffered.

"Gabriel Gaby, I thought I should die, DIE, when I believed that my father—I'm so proud of him, Gabriel!—was disgraced. Oh, I can't bear to remember it! And didn't it sound like a description of him? And I'd noticed queer things lately. Twice he was off early in the morning, digging, or hunting in the sand, and once I came suddenly into his laboratory and he seemed to cover papers on the table. It all flashed upon me when Mr. Lindley talked to me, that father was hiding things, that it must be he! Oh, Gabriel, I died, something in me died that moment! You don't know."

Sylvia shuddered, and Gabriel aroused to the

fact that he held the teapot and was not making for her the restoring tea.

"Sho, Sylvie!" he said gently. "Sure I can guess 'twas bad enough, child. An' I can see you couldn't hardly help feelin' they were talkin' 'bout your father; no one else here doos fit that description, so to speak. But, my stars an' ligaments, child, ain't it ridic'lous, when you come to think it over, to imagine Clement Bell doin' dishonest tricks, or even messin' round to make money honest? He ain't got no more money makin' to him'n that Mate o' mine has! Let alone manufacturin' counterfeit notes! An' as to dyin' over it, Sylvie, seem's if you didn't die so's't any one would notice it! Went home an' tried to git him out o' the way, didn't you? Such a girl! Don't look so awful much like a dead one."

"And he went, Gabriel! He did go," cried Sylvia. "I can't understand it. The things he said when he answered me would all have fitted if he'd been the counterfeiter. He told me he'd let me know what I was to do as soon as he saw it himself. He told me, in the meantime, to keep on my usual way. And he went, just as I suggested in hints that he should go. I couldn't tell him, I couldn't get *near* to tell-

ing him I knew he was—had to go.” Sylvia shuddered. “Gabriel, why did my father go away?”

“Why, Sylvie,” Gabriel Gaby said slowly, smiling at her, “your father went away because he was a-goin’ away, that’s all. He was goin’ up to Boston anyhow. I’d of told you that, you poor child, you, if you’d of come to me. He told me he was goin’ two days before, an’ asked if I wanted anything brought along. An’ I said, yes, I did, I wanted a good barometer to put outside on my house, an’ he’s goin’ to get it for me, be here when he comes to-morrer. You hadn’t any more to do with his goin’ away than your dog had. Don’t it seem funny how things will go together, provin’ a whole lot that ain’t so? Your tea’s drawed, Sylvie. Want it with sugar an’ cream, or *o natural*? That is French for ‘with water’, Sylvie. O stands for water in French, an’ natural’s just the same as ’tis in English.”

Sylvia choked back the laugh that nearly got the better of her.

“*All Naturel*, please, Gabriel dear, but make it of a weak nature, please; I hate the taste of tea, when it’s really tea,” she said.

She drank the tea and felt better for it,

though the cup was thick and the spoon pewter.

"Thanks, Gabriel Gaby, you dear old thing," she said, putting down Mate, who had gone to sleep in a round mat upon her lap. "I must go home. Cassandra Billings will be worried; it's past tea-time, but father isn't at home, so it doesn't matter. And he was going away anyway! Isn't it the queerest story, all around!"

"I wish to goodness I'd of been asked to see that capture, Sylvie," said Gabriel Gaby wistfully. "I've never seen law on shore administered, though I seen it a many times afloat. But of course you hadn't the right to invite guests. Sylvie, when you thought your father was a criminal, it didn't seem to make you go back on him? You didn't seem to desert him, so to speak? Did you notice it?"

"My father? How could I? You love anybody through anything, don't you, if you love him? I wish, Gabriel, my father wasn't so busy, or that I could know something about his work, for I'd be glad, glad, *gladdest* if I could know him quite well, and he liked to have me about! But it's all right, of course, and no one would go back on anybody, even if they had to—to live in—in prison. Good-bye; thank you

more than I can say, Gabriel. You are a dear, and I feel lots better."

With which valedictory Sylvia ran away, O'Malley at her heels, once more after her usual fashion.

Gabriel Gaby watched her away, then he turned to his neglected dinner, now cold.

"There's kinder a leadin' in them last remarks of yours, my Sylvie; I believe I'll meddle in, an' see what I can do when Clement Bell brings that barometer! Maybe it'll set for sunshine for Sylvie," he said, talking to himself after the fashion of those who have lived long alone.

CHAPTER XIV

SYLVIA'S REWARD

Gabriel Gaby's shack faced the ocean, consequently it faced the east. Gabriel would undoubtedly have kept up the early rising habit of his sailor days had his single-room house been toward the darkest north, but as it was he arose betimes in the dazzling glory of flooding ocean sunrise.

He had breakfasted, so had Mate, and he had set his house in order, and Mate had repaired the imaginary damage done her fur by contact with her plate, when the echo of eight strokes of the town clock faintly reached the beach.

Gabriel Gaby burned incense to each new day in his short-stemmed briarwood pipe, seated outside his door, after his trifling housework was done.

He sat there now, smoking with slow, deep whiffs of solid comfort. Mate sat on the plank that served as a doorstep, arching her neck in order to get at her white front with her

busy tongue, having finished her back at last to her entire satisfaction.

Early though it was, Mr. Bell came down the beach and hailed Gabriel as he came.

"You're gettin' home betimes, Mr. Bell," said Gabriel. "Must of started early."

"At six," Mr. Bell said. "I am used to lengthening out my days by using sleeping hours for other purposes, at either end of the day."

He set down his travelling bag and opened it.

"I found a barometer that strikes me as a good one, Gaby," he said, turning over the contents of the bag and exhuming from the bottom a square box.

He opened the box and displayed a round barometer.

"Put it up and test it," he said. "If it's all right keep it as a gift from my little girl, who spoke to me not long ago of wanting to get you a birthday present, which, I am ashamed to say, I forgot about till it came to me as I was buying this. If you don't like the instrument, let me know, and I'll send it back and we'll try another."

"That's very kind, Mr. Bell," said Gabriel Gaby. "I don't want you should think I was hirtin' for a present when I asked you to

fetch me this home. I intended to pay fer it."

"Of course, of course, but I'm glad to get it for you. I understand from Sylvia that you do her many kindnesses," said Mr. Bell.

"Well, I'll be honest with you," said Gabriel. "I'd like to do fer Sylvie. See here, Mr. Clement Bell, I wonder if you rightly know what that girl of yours is?"

"She's a nice child and, I think, a pretty one, and I am sure I hope a good one," said Sylvia's father with an indulgent smile.

"Oh, Jehosaphat! She's more'n that by a good deal! She's 'most a woman. She's one in ten thousand, that's what she is. Just as brave, and as truth-tellin', an' as kind as they come, an' besides an' what's more, she's a true little woman, doesn't stop at anything for them she loves, an' findin' no satisfaction in all her cleverness unless she's got some one who loves her, fer her to live and die fer. That's Sylvie Bell. Just you let me tell you what that poor girl's been endurin' and doin' fer two days! It beats all. Just set down and let me tell you. It's goin' to surprise you, but it'll gratify you wonderful."

"Sylvia? Enduring?" echoed Mr. Bell, frowning, but resuming his seat.

"En—durin'!" affirmed Gabriel Gaby emphatically. "There's been a pair of detectives 'round here lately, huntin' fer some counterfeiters. They went to Sylvia and asked 'f she'd ever seen any one answerin' their description. And, Mr. Clement Bell, that man—'twas the head one spoke to Sylvie—went on and described a man that worked in secret, was kinder keepin' off—described you, in fact, and nobody but you, in this place. And Sylvie'd been kinder struck by findin' you early mornin's diggin' round on the beach—that mornin' she brought you home when Eben went off and forgot you was one of 'em. And it grabbed her right round the heart that the father she downright worshipped was a criminal! Poor girl; she was hard hit."

"I? I a counterfeiter! Sylvia thought I was a criminal! Good heavens!" cried Mr. Bell, aghast.

"What could she think? Remember there wa'n't any one else fitted that description, an' you hadn't never let her know what you was doin'," Gabriel Gaby said.

"But look at this! Did she faint, or cry, or run away, or do any girl-sort of monkey tricks when she got that stab right in her adorin'

heart? Not Sylvie! She kep' her head, an' she told that man a story about a tumble-down house where counterfeaters might hide. It seems she'd found that old Willis house, where they say smugglers used to stay, an' had been makin' a kind o' story of it, the way children do, fer on one side Sylvie is a child. An' it popped into her head, an' she told the men it was the only place where such criminals might hide, an' she said she'd take both detectives there the next day. To gain time, do y' see? Then home she went, pretty near dead, an' kep' it from you, but told you the men was scourin' the place, so 's t' get you to go off. And go off you did, an' that poor thing was thankful you took her hint an' had run away, usin' the chance she'd purvided you by turnin' the trail up to that old house, yet, an' at the same time, bein' killed all over again by your goin', provin' you guilty. Then yes't'day she led the men up to that old house, the Hapgood boy, Mis' Leveritt's nephew, goin' along to see her through, an' there I'll be cut up fer bait, if there wasn't the counterfeaters' den, machinery and all! An' they caught 'em, an' Sylvie come on down, an' got her boat an' sailed 'em, the whole party, slap down to jail, comfortable 's you please!

An' she stopped here to tell me this story, an' she was as near done up as any one you ever seen. I made her some tea, an' I cleared up her last torment by tellin' her you went away 'cause that was what you was 'lottin' on doin' in the first place, an' she went home pretty near our old Sylvie. How's that?"

Mr. Bell was pacing up and down in the greatest distress as he listened to Gabriel Gaby's long story without an interruption, except an occasional groan.

Long as the story was, it omitted much which Mr. Bell was able by his imagination to supply.

"Gaby, it's horrible!" he cried at last. "Sylvia, that child, to be called upon to play this part! And she brought the criminals away in her boat? My brave little girl! How marvellous that they were actually there, in the spot she suggested, without a hope that it was correct!"

"D'you ever in your born days?" Gabriel Gaby confirmed him. "But bad 's 'twas to tramp up there, leadin' that expedition, an' worse 's 'twas to bring off them pris'ners, 'twan't a circumstance on her torture thinkin' you guilty and disgraced, an' keepin' it to herself,

tryin' to get you off 'thout tellin' you to your face what she knew. An', see here, Mr. Bell, how many girls would, or could, stand by a disgraced father like that?"

"She's a heroine!" cried Mr. Bell, tears in his eyes.

"Yes, an' more," Gabriel Gaby persisted, determined to finish his good work. "She's a lonely girl, lovin' you an' kinder worshippin' you, yet shut out from you. Last night she said to me herself, she said: 'I wish, Gabriel, my father wasn't so busy, or that I could know something about his work, for I'd be glad, glad, gladdest,' said she, 'f I could know him quite well an' he liked to have me about.' That was her exact words, an' she looked wistful. Verby soap, Mr. Bell, 's the sayin' is, or a word to the wise! Sylvie's hungry fer your notice, an' now you know just what she'd do fer you, an' that she ain't quite the little girl you've been takin' her fer. It's my opinion that you'd get a great bargain 'f you was to kinder take into your business a partner so rich in such a great capital of courage an' devotion, so to speak. 'F you'll allow me to speak my mind plain, which is my way when I do speak."

Mr. Bell looked profoundly moved. He wrung Gabriel Gaby's calloused hand and made two or three attempts to command his voice before he succeeded.

"Gaby, old friend, I'm grateful," he said. "I'm engulfed in my work, I've never realised, I suppose, that Sylvia had left childhood behind her. I do see, now that I consider, how lonely a young girl might be who was passing into womanhood without any one to whom to turn for proof of love and confidence, on whom to lavish such a creature's devotion. Sylvia should be rarely endowed with love, she—she inherits great-heartedness. You remember her mother, my wife? Thank you for opening my eyes, Gaby. This is a wonderful, a disturbing story you've told me, but one to make any father proud. I'll go home and—and find Sylvia."

Once more he wrung Gaby's hand. Then he bundled the contents of his black bag into it, caught it up and hurried away with boyish eagerness.

In the mean time Sylvia, not expecting her father's return, and being utterly worn out, for the first time in her memory when she awakened, had not hurried to rise that morning.

Cassandra Billings came up with an anxious

face to learn what was wrong, for Sylvia was always an energetic and early riser, being too full of plans to afford to waste daylight hours.

"Sick, Miss Sylvia?" she inquired, her head thrust into Sylvia's room, her body in the hall.

"No, not a bit, Casabianca—Cassie," Sylvia said sleepily, falling into Cassandra's nickname and sleepily correcting herself. "I'm tired, that's all."

"You tired!" exclaimed Cassandra incredulously. "Of course you're not tired, a girl like you! You're sick. I'll fix you something to take."

"It seems to me that for two days everybody has been saying to me: 'A girl like you!'" said Sylvia, arousing to meet this new danger. "Some day, when I'm rested, I'll tell you why I'm tired; I'm pretty sure you'll think it enough reason. I am not sick, Cassie, and I know exactly what you'll give me to take—peppermint, bicarbonate of soda and aromatic ammonia! Cassie, *no!* I am not sick, honestly, but I should be if you dosed me. That mixture is enough to finish any one. I thought I'd just plain lie in bed late and rest this morning. But, if it worries you, I'll get up. I'll be down soon, Cassandra. I don't care about

a hot breakfast. Let me have some bread and butter and berries, and a glass of milk, nothing more."

"And you say you're not sick!" ejaculated Cassandra, departing in a sort of fury of incredulity.

She was surer of Sylvia's ill health than before when the girl appeared later, dark circles beneath her eyes, weariness expressed by her drooping body and languid step.

"I've known you for fifteen years, Miss Sylvia, an' never once have I seen you like this," said Cassandra sternly.

"I've known myself nearly as long, not quite, because I didn't get acquainted with myself for a while after you knew me pretty well, and I don't remember feeling like this," Sylvia replied, shaking out her napkin and looking with disfavour at a glass of milk waiting beside her plate. "But you see, Cassandra Billings, my dear, I never before lived through such exciting times. I never before helped the government capture two counterfeiters, nor sailed two criminals to jail in my boat."

Sylvia's eyes fell as she said this so that Cassandra could not see the laughter in them, but she managed to look up under her dark

lashes and see the utter consternation justly imprinted upon that worthy person's face.

Cassandra dropped into a chair near the door; she turned pale and gasped.

"Sylvia Bell, Miss Sylvia Bell," she cried, "for the love of lightnin', what'll you tell me next!"

"A whole lot, Cassie, but I won't tell you now." Sylvia could no longer keep back her laughter, which rang out in an infectious peal. "When you go to market you'll hear the rest of it, and probably a great deal more than I know myself. The whole place must be talking about it. But there are some things that nobody will know but the Hapgoods and me, and Gabriel Gaby, and you, when I tell you. And father, if he should care to hear about it."

Sylvia sighed a little and turned her attention to her raspberries. Cassandra, meditating upon Sylvia's meagre information, came back to announce that she was going to fetch the vegetables which she had ordered for dinner.

"You can't half trust 'em to send 'em in time," Cassandra said, and Sylvia nodded with complete understanding.

"Sure-ly, Cassandra!" she laughed. "Good

morning to go to the market yourself! I half thought you would go!"

Cassandra departed with more than usual dignity to convey to Sylvia her superiority to the curiosity imputed to her.

Sylvia compromised on raspberries and her glass of milk for her breakfast, and then rejoiced O'Malley's heart by going out to lie in the hammock. Difficult as it was to stand with his head on her knees while she slowly swung, O'Malley was ready to count the bumps he received as joy, for the sake of ending the unusual delay of Sylvia's morning appearance.

Sylvia opened her eyes with a start; she had half fallen asleep, lazily swinging.

She saw her father coming up the walk; it was the closing of the gate that had aroused her. She leaped out of the hammock, suddenly aware that she had been unconsciously dreading this first meeting with her father since the great events of the preceding days.

Mr. Bell did not give her time to be embarrassed. He came up the walk fast, bounded up the steps and caught Sylvia in his arms in an embrace so impetuous, so loving that Sylvia's heart leaped and stood still at the wonder of it.

"My little girl, my brave, loyal, true little

girl!" cried Sylvia's father. "Child, child, what a girl you are!"

"Father! Me! Father—what—what is it?" stammered Sylvia.

"Gabriel Gaby has been telling me all about it! At least a good deal about it; I shall want to hear every detail, all you thought, all you did, above all everything you suffered, my splendid girl! And you thought your father was a criminal, poor little thing! And you hid your shame and your pain and tried to save him! And you stood right by him, though he deserved only to be an outcast! Sylvia, I thank you, daughter! I don't deserve such devotion, but, if it in any way repays you, I do appreciate it!"

Sylvia clung to him unsteadily, tears of unbearable joy streaming down her cheeks.

"It would—it would repay me for dying!" she sobbed.

"Let us sit down, dear; you are actually shaking," said Mr. Bell, putting his arm around Sylvia and drawing her into his lap in a deep willow chair. "Put your head on my shoulder, dear. Let me rock you as if you really were the little girl I've been considering you. Dearie, this has shown me how wrong I am not to let you into all the deep places of my life. You

should know just what my work is. Perhaps you can help me in it. I always have wished that I had a son who would be my assistant. It is more than likely that my clever daughter can do all and more than a son could have done—”

He stopped, checked by Sylvia's hand over his lips.

“Don't, don't say any more now, father; don't! I'll die of joy! I can't bear it!” Sylvia cried. “Oh, what has it all been, the worst of it, compared to this? Father, I'd have gone to state prison myself to hear you say that! I want, want, *want* so to be a real daughter to you!”

“It was my fault alone that you have not been my intimate comrade all this time, sweetheart,” said her father, kissing her lovely, illuminated face, raised to his.

“And yet it wasn't a fault, precisely. It was not that I didn't want you, dear, but that I was too preoccupied to realise that you were growing up, almost to a woman's stature, in mind and heart, as well as body. Sylvia, I never told you of your mother. You are like her, though she was a tiny creature, and you are tall, like the Bells. But you look very like her. I met her,

Sylvia, and she awoke in an abstracted, pre-occupied youth, a love that was—Sylvia, she was perfect, and I did adore her! I have learned to be thankful that, though it cost me agony, I did love her with all my being. We were married a little less than two blissful years. They were blissful to her, also, dear, for our marriage was a real union, based on mutual respect. And then your mother, a week after she was your mother, died. It had to be borne; that is why it was borne. The loss of her was the loss of sunshine, strength, hope, joy, everything. I have lived in my work ever since. Will her little girl, the little girl whom I thankfully find inheriting her greatness of soul, her truth, courage, wonderful power to love, will she forgive me that I mourned her mother too much to realise the needs of the great gift she had left me? For henceforth, Sylvia, my dear daughter and your mother's daughter, you and I are going to be one. Shall we be, my dear?"

"Father, oh, father," was all that Sylvia could manage to say, but she clung to her father with all her might and kissed him, as she had often dreamed of kissing him, but had never dared to do before.

They sat for a while in silence, Mr. Bell stroking Sylvia's hair, Sylvia twisting a button on his coat, wondering if it could be she thus encircled by his arms, loved and caressed as girls less self-reliant and competent, but more happy than she had thought herself heretofore, were loved and petted.

"Father, were you going to tell me about your work?" asked Sylvia after a long, restful silence.

"I am not going to the laboratory till after dinner, dear. This is to be your morning. I would rather study you, and be studied by you, than go on with my usual studies," said Mr. Bell, seconding Sylvia's attempt to sit erect.

"That's dear!" she cried. "But I meant— Did you want to tell me about that work?"

"Oh, surely! But I can't tell you much at once. You must learn it, that is, if it interests you," Mr. Bell said. "I am working on regeneration."

"Father!" Sylvia's tone was distinctly shocked. "How can you? What *do* you mean? Isn't that— Why, father, that is—is—in church, you know!" Sylvia found difficulty in expressing with sufficient delicacy her understanding of this term.

Mr. Bell tipped back his head and laughed, laughed heartily, as Sylvia had never heard him laugh.

"Dear child, I am using the word in a scientific sense," he explained. "Regeneration in this case means the power possessed by some organisms to renew a part of their bodies which has been lost. For instance, if an angleworm is cut into halves, the section that lost the head grows a new head; the section that kept a head and lost the tail, grows a new tail. I work with certain sea forms, not with angleworms; I used that as an illustration, because it came within your experience. The morning you found me marooned, and gallantly rescued me, I was out after specimens."

"Of course I don't understand, not yet," said Sylvia, with widening eyes. "It is strange. What do you do with them, with it all, father?"

"Experiment with chemicals, to learn which promote, which retard this regeneration, dear; patiently work, and watch, and hope, to increase the sum of human knowledge, to build up, just as sea forms, with which I cannot work, build up the tropic islands, so that, little by little, man comes better to understand the marvellous processes of life. Science means

knowledge, Sylvia; if we love it we labour for it, sometimes with the vain reward of a little renown, sometimes with the supreme reward of attaining our end, increasing the inheritance of mankind, ourselves unknown. This is best, dear, I fancy; more truly the aim of the scientist who is sincere. A great love, or a worthy aim, neither of these seeks its own glory, Sylvia. Do you think you will care to help me?"

"If I am fit to, father," Sylvia said humbly. Then she threw back her head, and a blush of pride in him spread over her face and throat, as she looked at her father with glowing eyes.

"Think what I have!" she said breathlessly. "Think what I have! You are greater even than I imagined, and I have always been so proud, proud of you! And now I have you, all my very own!"

She sprang from his knee and stood before him, sweeping a deep courtesy.

"Who am I, your majesty! I am glad to be presented at court, but I am far more noble than Her Royal Highness, the Princess of Wales. I am Clement Bell's daughter, and he is greater than a king!"

CHAPTER XV

PROMOTION

Cassandra Billings came in by the side door on her return. She found Sylvia in the kitchen. She was enveloped from neck to hem in a checked gingham apron, of the variety known as "bungalow aprons," and she was stirring something on the stove, while Susie stood by, forgetting her own tasks, in a wonderment that was perceptible at a glance.

Cassandra took off her severe shade hat, hung it on a nail behind the door, and, only then, allowed herself to yield to the surprise of seeing Sylvia thus employed and caparisoned.

"Well, Jerusalem Halifax, gentleman, Miss Sylvia!" Cassandra exclaimed. "Do I live to see the day! And do I see the day, or is it sun-stroke? It's hot enough! What on earth are you up to?"

Sylvia turned, revealing a crimson face, around her forehead her damp hair clinging.

"You see the day and you see me, Casabianca—Cassie," she said. "I'm up to helping

get dinner. Mrs. Leveritt showed me how to make a perfectly scrumptious sauce for cutlets, and I'm making it. It's because I'm promoted, Cassandra Billings! I'm promoted so high that I've got to fill in all the lower stages. I've got to be all sorts of things, just because I'm so great that nothing else matters."

"Miss Sylvia!" cried Cassie, wrinkling her brow in genuine distress. "What is it? Don't you feel 's well 's you did? You kept sayin' 'twas only tired, but I knew it had to be more'n that, when 'twas you havin' it. And now you're talkin' so incoherent! Did that awful time you've went through do any real harm? Tell me the actual truth. 'Twas perfectly awful, child; all the place is talkin' about it an' you! They say one of those ruffians drew a knife on you, an' Lloyd Hapgood was just able to jump forward at the right minute, an' he knocked up the man's hand, an' the knife flew right out o' it, an' stuck right into the wall! It made me down sick to hear it! Think o' the force he must have been goin' to use in stabbin' with it, 'f it flew like that when Lloyd struck his arm! Do you keep dwellin' on it, does it make you feel bad? Tell me, dear child, an' then it won't be kind o' hauntin' you, after

you've talked about it. Makes me sick to think of it all, a girl like you!"

"There's the girl like me again, Cassie!" laughed Sylvia. "As though every one wasn't a girl exactly like herself! It doesn't seem to haunt me, Cassie, that knife adventure, and I think maybe that's because it never happened! I knew there'd be splendid new chapters to this story told around town! Isn't that a nice one! Shame to spoil it! But nobody tried to harm me, nothing happened when I was about. Still, I was quite satisfied to have to be there, and to sail those men down here. It doesn't sound so fine, but it felt rather uncomfortable."

"Well," admitted Cassandra, reluctant to give up the thing that had horrified her, "that's the way I felt till I'd heard worse. Then what are you talking about? What do you mean by promoted, an' gettin' dinner?"

"Cassandra, my father has told me all about his work. Or not all about it, but a beginning. And I'm to be allowed to go into the laboratory, and he will teach me to help him," said Sylvia slowly and impressively. "Now I shall learn to keep house. Now I shall cook. Now I shall sew and mend. I shall try to be just what a nice girl is who hasn't a scientific father, and

isn't allowed to help him add to the knowledge of the world. That's what father is doing, he told me, adding to the sum of knowledge. And I am to help. So I shall have to be everything else I can be. It is *noblesse oblige*; any one can see that."

"Well, of all things!" ejaculated Cassandra, floundering in a sea of dimly understood things, which seemed to be working miracles. Then she laid fast hold of the one point that rejoiced her. "Whatever it is, Miss Sylvia, that's led your steps out here, an' set you to makin' anything whatever, I'm thankful for it! An' if you mean your father's been admittin' you into his confidence, I'm still more glad, an' that not for my sake, much 's I'd like to see you growin' into a useful, womanly woman, but for your own sake, child. It strikes me these are what might be called, 's our minister said the other night, stirrin' times of tremendous prophecies! For a quiet life and a humdrum place, a lot's happenin', seem 's if!"

"There are great things happening, Cassie, but they're the things that are mostly inside, out of sight. It isn't the counterfeiting, nor the arrest that matters to us. It is—it is—the other things," said Sylvia.

"It never is what happens around that counts, child; it is always inside ourselves, for each of us. It isn't what happens; it's who it happens to that makes the events of life weighty," said Cassandra, with the perception that was hers.

"Ain't that sauce scorchin' the least mite, Miss Sylvia? Better stir it."

Sylvia sprang to the stove and did stir it, tasting it critically and discovering, to her relief, that it was not harmed.

The dinner was a banquet to Sylvia. Heat, discomfort from her service in the kitchen, the weariness of the morning, the disagreeable memories of her recent adventure, all were wiped out for the girl. For the first time in her short life she sat at her father's table in all verity his own daughter, his comrade, his beloved and understood child, his associate in years to come.

Mrs. Leveritt's delicious sauce suffered no loss at Sylvia's hands. When her father learned from Cassandra—who lost no time in telling him of it—that Sylvia had made the sauce, he praised it highly, and made a point of asking for a second, and then a third helping of it.

Under these conditions a dinner of herbs would have been an Olympian feast to Sylvia.

She ate and drank happiness beyond all telling, and earthly flavours were blended and transfused into it.

"Do you feel like coming with me into the laboratory this afternoon, Sylvia?" asked Mr. Bell when dinner was over and Sylvia, half timidly, but yet wholly joyfully, ventured to slip her hand into her father's arm and go with him out to the piazza again.

"May I? Shall I be in the way?" cried Sylvia.

"I think I am asking you that you may be in the way—in the way of going there and working there," said Mr. Bell with a smile that warmed the cockles of Sylvia's heart.

It seemed to her the most momentous action of her life when her father opened the laboratory door, and she entered it behind him.

She saw a well-proportioned room, considerably exceeding its width in length. At the north end of the room, beneath a wide window, stood a small table, which held only a fine microscope. The door was on the east, close to that northern end, opening back against the intervening wall space. On the left of the microscope table stood a small gas oven, heated from below with a single burner. Down the

length of the western wall, broken by two wide windows, were built tanks, each tank slightly tipped toward the room, each with a faucet over it, supplied with water from an iron pipe that ran along behind the tanks. Another wide window was in the middle of the southern wall, beneath which stood a long table, covered with the drawing instruments and papers which had startled Sylvia on that day when she had thought that her father was trying to conceal them.

At the end of the eastern wall, next the southern corner, stood a sink. Two windows brought this wall into correspondence with its opposite, the western wall. A long table stood under the windows, stained with mixed colours. Back of it a row of shelves held jars, wide-mouthed, filled with various stains. At each end of this long table, on the wall space from windows to corners, were shelves, and upon them stood glass containers marked "Alcohol," "Xylol" "Distilled Water."

"How does it strike you, my dear?" asked Mr. Bell, smiling at the absorbed air with which Sylvia stood in the middle of the floor taking in these details.

"As if I were just dropped down from another

planet, and had no idea what I was seeing," said Sylvia.

"That will soon be changed," Mr. Bell assured her. "Eben, my daughter is going to learn to be a laboratory assistant. She will soon be most useful tinting our slides, plotting our curves, doing all the many tasks that require sensitive fingers and faithful observation."

Eben Tompkins regarded Sylvia with disfavour that was emphasised by its repression. He looked at her scowlingly and grunted. More than that grunt said he did not express, but Sylvia felt that he could not have expressed more.

After a moment of smouldering disgust, Eben allowed himself a remark.

"Got on well enough!" he muttered, but Mr. Bell prudently indulged in a slight temporary hardness of hearing.

"I was going to start an experiment this afternoon, Sylvia," he said, ignoring Eben's jealous dislike of this youthful interloper.

"I am going to study the effect of certain chemicals on the growth of a starfish's new limb. I'll let you start this experiment and keep a record of it. Here are starfish, freshly brought in. Take one of these and put him

in this tank. Here he has all the comforts of home, everything he best likes to live with, and on, natural conditions of the best sort. Another we'll put in this tank. The water in this tank is chemically treated. Before we drop the starfish into the tanks, we ask them to take off a leg, politely, just as a pleasant hostess asks you to lay aside your coat and hat. After our starfishes have each shed a leg, we put one in the natural conditioned tank, the other in the chemically treated one. We keep a record of the growth of both new legs. When we get through, we shall know whether our chemicals promote or retard growth, whether the growth is greater or less when there is no stimulation. Do you see? It is to study the effect of various chemicals on cell formation, and cell formation is the very root of life and health for every class of living organisms. Does it interest you, my dear?"

"Of course!" cried Sylvia. "It makes me feel as if I were seeing a door opening, and through it I could see a long avenue of great arches."

"My dear little Sylvia!" cried Mr. Bell, flushing with pleasure. "And that happy simile makes me feel as if I saw a long, sunny road

opening before me, down which I should march triumphant, with a daughter who would more than replace the son I never had to help me, and for whom I have always longed."

Sylvia made an impetuous movement to hug her father, but, remembering Eben, restrained herself.

Her shining eyes were sufficient to show her father her joy in what he said, though her only reply was:

"We must not be poetical in a laboratory, must we, Mr. Bell? How do you ask a starfish to remove his leg? I don't seem to know how to address one."

"You hold him up by one leg till he drops it off, which he will do reasonably soon. You must select starfish of the same age for your experiment, else there will not be an accurate basis of comparison of growth," her father said, with a pat on Sylvia's arm by way of acknowledging her grateful look toward him.

Sylvia went over to the pail containing the starfishes ready for use.

"Will two starfishes of the fourth grade please come forward for examination?" she said, bending over them. "They are exactly like the eldest oyster, father; he 'did not choose to

leave his oysterbed,' you know. How in the world can you judge their age?"

"Take two of the same size, and risk the birthday," said Mr. Bell, laughing aloud. "Nonsense doesn't do any harm here, Sylvia, but let it be no more than on your lips; if you want to do faithful work you must keep your mind steady, your attention focussed, on what you are about."

Sylvia picked up two starfishes, and showed them to her father.

"These?" she asked, nodding in reply to his reminder that her love of play must be bridled.

The starfishes obligingly dropped off a leg and were placed in their respective tanks.

"Now I'll show you how to plot the curves of this experiment, and then you must keep the record," said Mr. Bell, going over to the long drawing table that occupied nearly the entire length of the southern side of the room.

"Father, you said something about plotting before!" cried Sylvia. "What can you mean? I don't want to plot! And to plot starfishes' curves! It doesn't sound like a nice plot—like getting Prince Charlie home from over the water, or something dangerous and revolutionary in Poland."

"It isn't a conspiracy, my dear; it's not that kind of plot. It's laying-out, in the sense of a garden plot," Mr. Bell explained. "See here. Lines going across—you may as well learn proper words in the beginning—are called abscissæ."

Mr. Bell drew a number of lines across the width of his paper. Then he drew an equal number vertically. "And these upright lines," he went on, "are called ordinates. Now each line of the ordinates shall stand for a day. We'll number them below." He rapidly wrote numbers at the end of each line, numbering from one up. "And the abscissæ will record growth. Each day you will measure your starfish. If he has grown one millimetre, for instance, you will draw a line from the first ordinate to the point where the first abscissa crosses it. If he has grown two or three millimetres, you will draw a line from the meeting point of the first ordinate to the second or third abscissa. So, when your experiment is done, you will have a rising line showing exactly what the growth has been from day to day, and you will compare these two charts to learn which starfish grew faster, the chemically treated one, or the one left to nature unassisted. Do you understand?"

Mr. Bell pushed over to Sylvia the chart upon which he had been drawing lines to illustrate what he was saying.

"I see; it is like a fever chart," said Sylvia.

"Precisely. After this I shall teach you to make specimens of the tissue thus grown, to colour them, prepare them for the microscope. Let me show you slides already prepared." Mr. Bell led Sylvia to the opposite, smaller table, on which only the microscope stood. "Do you see those jars of alcohol and xylol on the shelves? And those colour stains in the smaller jars behind the table? Those you will learn to use to prepare the thinnest shaving of the new cells; they are made to reveal their variations by being dipped in a succession of stains of different colours; some tissues take on one colour, some another, thus we can see their characteristics; they are brought out by the difference in colour. Then we make the specimens transparent, and at last the microscope shows us the secrets which we, though unseeing, made ready for it to reveal."

"Father, what patience, what patience!" cried Sylvia. "What time it takes! What comes of it all? What about you, your reward?"

"Patience? Indeed it requires patience, also

perseverance, my dear," said her father. "And time? A lifetime for each explorer in his own line, and that is far too brief. My reward? The work itself, the delight in it, daily renewed, for one thing. For another the hope of adding to the world's knowledge, as I've already told you. But there is sometimes more than the hope, there is sometimes a real success. It would look like a trifling one to others, but to the scientist there is no such thing as a trifle in research discovery. And the minute gain in biological knowledge may be a step toward a great gain for the race. I have made one or two—a few—discoveries, and records that have been published. The scientist, my little girl, does not set out with the hope of receiving, but of giving, if he is actuated by the best motives. If he is selfish, well, still he does not work for material reward, but to gain knowledge."

"Father, what big, big things there are in the world! What *big* things!" cried Sylvia. "How big even little things are."

"Dear child, there are no little things, in a sense. Nothing is little that is done for and by human beings with an immortal destiny," said Mr. Bell. "That is what is meant by

people who 'have the vision.' They are people who are blessed with the power to see through and beyond the surface faults, the defects of human actions, in civic and private life. They are those who believe, because they see it after a fashion, in the glory that runs like a vein of fire through the commonplace and sinful, as R. L. S. said. The true idealist is one that sees beauty in spite of the ugliness that coats it. They are the ones who have led mankind to do great deeds, and up to great heights. I hope you will always be keen-sighted and enthusiastic enough to feel, as you just said, 'how big even little things are.' "

"I hope so, too, father," cried Sylvia. "I do see it now, but I've noticed that older people seem to get—well, tired of getting up steam!"

"And let their fires die down? That's true. I fancy the truth of the saying that 'those whom the gods love die young,' lies in the fact that idealists die young-hearted, 'keeping up steam,' as you call it, for I'm sure the high gods love idealists." Mr. Bell smiled at Sylvia very fondly.

"These discussions will be forbidden when we are regularly at work here, my dear, but this is a reception to you, your début in science!

You can't learn to work here merely by being told about it; you must get to work and learn by doing. What is it, Sylvia?"

Sylvia was looking with disgust into a tank. She turned away as she answered her father.

"They are quite the squeeshiest, messiest, most unlovable things ever made, those sea cucumbers! What do you use them for?" she asked.

"Holothurians, Assistant Biologist, if you please!" said Mr. Bell. "They aren't particularly attractive. I'm certain I don't know that word, 'squeeshy,' but I can see it precisely fits that soft, black substance. Use them for? For regeneration. They are excellent specimens."

"Well, I never heard regeneration used the way you use it, any more than you know my lovely 'squeeshy,' but I certainly do think those soft, nasty things would be sensible to regenerate, if they can!" declared Sylvia, and once more her father laughed, surprised to find how pleasant this girlish talk made his laboratory.

"I'm going after specimens the day after to-morrow, down the bay and farther. Suppose you sail me there; would it interfere with any of your plans, my dear?" he asked.

"Lovely! I should say not!" cried Sylvia. "Father, I'm sorry, but I've been hearing Lloyd Hapgood whoo-whooping for me. Will you mind if I go out to see what's the matter? It must be something more than just visiting, or he'd give up calling me and go away."

"Certainly, my dear; I did not hear anything. What is 'whoo-whooping'? This is a day most improving to our vocabularies, yours and mine," Mr. Bell's eyes twinkled at Sylvia, though he did not smile.

"Listen! That's it. Now I'll show you in soprano," Sylvia said, holding up her finger to make her father harken to Lloyd's call, then opening the door and replying to it.

She started off, flew back, caught her father around the neck, kissed him three times with immense sincerity and disregard of sullen Eben Tompkins, and then was gone.

"Mr. Clement Bell," said Eben Tompkins as soon as Sylvia had darted away, "am I your laboratorynian, or not?"

"Laboratory—" Mr. Bell checked his involuntary wonder at Eben's word. "You surely are just what you have been all along, Eben; my reliable and valued all-around assistant."

"Then, Mr. Bell," said Eben severely, "I

must say I want to be it with peace of mind. I do not *think*, I do *not* think this is any place for misses, for the simple but convincin' reason that misses *are* misses; they miss 'most everything a sensible man, out-grown the playroom, likes to have in his workin' hours."

"One moment, Eben; that will do. My daughter will assist in my work, if she is kind enough to consent to do so. And furthermore, I am the best judge of what and whom is to be useful here. Good gracious, man," cried Mr. Bell in a burst of feeling most unlike his usual quiet manner, "can't you see what I've been losing, and, if you care for me, as I know you do, can't you be thankful I've seen it at last, and got it? If all the science in the world were weighed in the balance, would it equal the sum of the love of that child?"

CHAPTER XVI

"ALL OUR SWAINS COMMEND HER"

"Well, Tink, come home with us when we go; we'll take you to an ear specialist, got a dandy one where we live!" cried Lloyd when Sylvia came running around the house to find him and Ruth despairing of her coming. "We've whooped and whooped, and called and called! Where were you?"

"In the laboratory," said Sylvia with elaborate carelessness. "I am going to help my father in his great work all the rest of my life. I started an experiment to-day; that's all, but that was only the beginning."

Suddenly she dropped her assumed manner, caught Ruth around the waist and swung her off her feet, spinning around with the smaller girl held fast.

"Ruth, Ruth, you nice little thing, father's pleased because I thought him dishonest!" she cried. "I mean he's pleased because I didn't care if he was a criminal. No, I don't either! Oh, you know what I mean!"

"Course!" cried Ruth, catching her breath again after the spin.

"You mean he's pleased you had the stuff in you to take it standing, and standing-by, which is about what you'd expect him to feel," said Lloyd heartily. "Wish you'd tell us about that work, Tink, but not now. Say, look what's here! I stopped in the post office coming up; thought I might as well ask for your mail as long as we were coming right on, and here's what they handed out to us!"

Lloyd offered Sylvia a package and a letter which he held. The envelope bore on the upper left corner the name and address of the Secret Service office in the city, and Sylvia looked from it to Lloyd and Ruth with questioning eyes.

"Open it and see," Ruth impatiently answered their question. "I wonder why no one ever does hurry to open an envelope when they want to know what's in it! We're crazy to know!"

Sylvia laughed and started to tear the envelope, but Ruth intervened, offering her hat pin.

"Slit it nicely, Sylvia; you may want to keep it," she said.

"Oh, cracky! Crazy to know, and stop to slit an envelope neatly!" Lloyd shouted. "What

for, Ruth? To hand down to future generations? Girls are great!"

"Quite so, Mr. Hapgood; they are," agreed Sylvia, who by this time had made the "neat slit" recommended by Ruth. She drew from the long envelope two sheets of paper. One was a brief, but impressive missive. It was duly headed with "Miss Sylvia Bell's" name and address, and began: "Dear Madam."

From this point the writer—in the third person, and in the name of his office—begged leave to thank Miss Bell for her "recent service to the government in discovering the headquarters, and contributing to the arrest of certain criminals who were counterfeiting the currency."

The writer—in the third person—begged permission also to express the obligation of his office and of that branch of the government service to Miss Bell, and to "be allowed to subscribe himself her humble servant, Alexander Hughes."

Beneath which followed three other signatures of subordinate, yet important members of this chief's staff.

"Mercy me!" gasped Sylvia. "Isn't it rather awful!"

"Rather not!" Lloyd corrected her. "Read

the other one, Tink. That must offer you a what-do-you-call-it? A scrap book, no, a portfolio in the cabinet."

Sylvia unfolded the second letter and glanced at the signature.

"Oh, Mr. Lindley!" she cried, and read:

"Dear Miss Bell (Captain Sylvia). I've been thinking a lot about what a good little sport you were, and how well you helped us. It was no fun, that's certain, and I didn't know at the time what there was to make it especially hard for you. I've told the office about it, and the chief is writing you his formal, but sincere thanks, backed by the rest of the staff.

"I want to thank you more than I'm able to. And just how much I have to thank you, you'll see when I tell you that my promotion and increase of income depended on my putting this job through right. And on my promotion depended the happiness of a mighty nice girl, only about seven years older than you are, which will be no difference at all ten years hence. I am going to marry this sweet little girl next October, and if I had failed to catch the scalawags I was sent to find on your coast, I should not have been able to marry for some time. So you see, I'm grateful to you, and so is the nice girl I'm telling you about.

"I noticed that you were never separated from that Irish terrier of yours that you call O'Malley, and that he is the very apple of your eye. He couldn't see straight with his eyes, for he thought there was something wrong about your humble servant; you remember he always

growled at me. However, I bear no malice. He is right to guard his mistress. I want to send you something, not as a reward; don't misunderstand me. But as a reminder that I'm truly grateful. I couldn't think of anything you'd be willing to take from me, except a collar for O'Malley. So I'm sending you that by parcel post, in the same mail with this. Hope it fits him. I got the measure of another Irish terrier to go by. Tell O'Malley that it's coals of fire, as well as a thank offering to his lady. Bid him repent for the things he said to me every time we met. Hoping sometime to have the pleasure of seeing you again, and that all happiness may come your way, I am gratefully and sincerely

"Yours,

"WILLIAM LINDLEY."

"Well, isn't that nice, Sylvia!" cried Ruth, much impressed. "To think that you helped him to get his promotion, and now he'll be married! You helped two people to be happy together!"

"Ruth! Don't, don't get sentimental!" cried Sylvia. "But it is a nice letter, really," she added hastily seeing that Ruth looked a little hurt. "It's a fine letter, it's the kind that makes you think the writer meant every word of it. I'm as pleased as Punch, and it is fine to have been able to help. Only, you see, it makes me feel as big as a pin point—the size that comes in a bolt of ribbon! For, you know,

I never once thought of helping him; I meant to hinder him, because I thought he was suspecting my father! Oh, when I think of that I don't know whether I want most to laugh, or to cry! It isn't fair to get all these thanks, and then a collar for O'Malley!"

"Anyhow O'Malley wasn't deceiving him; he said exactly what he thought, as Lindley says. Open up the collar, Tink. Look at O'Malley!" cried Lloyd.

O'Malley was dancing what may have been an Irish reel, knowing he was the subject of the conversation, and receiving no attention.

"Oh, my bold dragoon, you've a present, parcel post!" cried Sylvia, falling upon him vehemently. Then she tore open the parcel and took from its box O'Malley's new collar.

It was made of green leather, and its buckle, ring, name plate and slide were of silver. The name plate was engraved "Sylvia Bell" in remarkably beautiful letters, beautifully executed. On each side of the name plate were three good-sized tourmalines, set in silver, in the shape of a shamrock, sunk and rivetted into the leather.

"My goodness!" cried Ruth. "Who ever saw such a dog collar!"

"Well, Tink, some collar!" Lloyd said. "You'll

need a detective of your own to go along with O'Malley, to keep off thieves. Try it on."

Sylvia turned the collar over and over in her hands, too overwhelmed to comment upon it.

"He will wear it only on great occasions," she said solemnly.

Lloyd shouted. "Christmas, Fourth of July, Lincoln's Birthday, Washington's ditto?" he suggested. "And through the dog days; he'll have to wear it in dog days, and that's now. Put it on, Tink; brace up! The worst is not yet—maybe it won't fit!"

"It will; you can see that," said Sylvia, arousing herself from the breath-stopping shock of such a collar, for such a dog.

"At any rate, it's perfectly magnificent, it's like the collar of a king, but it's not so glorious as you are, Charles O'Malley, dog of the world! Come here, my Irish dragoon, and accept this tribute to your worth entrusted to your unworthy handmaiden."

She took off O'Malley's old collar and buckled on the new one, fastening it with one more touch of elegance, a silver padlock which Ruth discovered in the box in which it had come.

"Pay tribute! He's the last of the Irish kings!" cried Sylvia.

She fell on her knees on the grass and made deep obeisance, spreading her hands on the ground and touching her forehead to it between them. Ruth and Lloyd, catching her spirit, followed suit.

"Hail, noble Fenian!" said Ruth, somewhat uncertain as to Irish titles.

"Hail, Harp That Once Through Tara's Halls!" said Lloyd, proud of this inspiration.

"Hail, O'Malley dhu—some of his hairs are black!—Lord of the Isles, Chief of the Sea-Bound Coast, and Head of my Heart!" cried Sylvia, wishing that she remembered Ossian's poetry better, for much as she loved it, she could not recall it now, and also wishing that she was sure how much of it might be safely transferred from Scottish to Irish application.

However, it did not make much difference, for O'Malley, after he had sniffed at his new collar, which he perfectly understood was new and pleasing to his mistress, thought the strange game attractive, made a sudden bound against Sylvia and bowled her over, just as she finished her salutation, and was bent low for another deep obeisance.

Ruth rolled over on her side to laugh, with her face buried in the grass.

"Oh, Sylvia, you are the queerest girl! You've read a lot, and you do a lot, and yet you're often just about five your last birthday!" she cried, drying her eyes on a plantain leaf—which deserved plucking for being in the turf.

"Four and a half," Sylvia corrected her. "And I like the half better than the four, even at that!"

Mr. Bell heard the ringing shouts of laughter and came out from his laboratory to learn their cause. When had he ever done such a thing before as to leave his work to share children's fun? he wondered as he came.

He admired O'Malley's jewelled collar with unstinted praise, he read Sylvia's two letters with unmistakable pleasure. When he folded them to return them to her he whistled a beautiful air, looking at Ruth and Lloyd with a gleam in his eyes, which Ruth noticed were like Sylvia's own, dark blue, with the same dark lashes, and the earnestness so readily turned to mirth.

"I don't know that, Mr. Bell," Ruth said, seeing that Mr. Bell meant something by his whistling.

Then Mr. Bell surprised Sylvia by beginning

to sing in a mellow baritone; Sylvia had no idea that her father sang. And what he sang was two lines of Schubert's perfect setting of Shakespeare's lovely song:

"Who is Sylvia, what is she,
That all our swains commend her?"

He broke off at this point with a comical look of alarm.

"Mustn't go on!" he said. "The question is answered in too extravagant terms of praise! This spoiled girl of mine would forget how long ago Shakspeare wrote it, and imagine it was her own description! But 'all our swains' do seem to 'commend' you of late, Captain Sylvia, don't they? Even Gabriel Gaby and your purblind father! Ruth and Lloyd Hapgood, this old salt is going to take me out in her good ship the day after to-morrow; why don't you persuade her to ask you to join her crew? But early, mind! It's the early scientist that catches the worm. Nematode worms—their family name is Nereus, if you care to be exact—are part of the prizes we shall seek. Will you come? What about it, Sylvia?"

"Fine—if they will not be seasick!" Sylvia said, looking as if she could hardly keep her feet down on common earth to find her father

"downright chummy," as she told herself, "and knows how to fool!"

"We'd love to go, sir," said Lloyd. "Seasick! Not much, Tink! We're over that. You're awfully kind, Mr. Bell."

"Yes?" Mr. Bell pretended to consider. "Am I? Well, on the whole, I'm afraid you're wrong, Master Lloyd. I'm grateful to the fine boy who stood by Sylvia when she was in trouble. I want to thank you. I think I'm asking you for my own sake; I'd like to have a jolly cruise. I suspect I want to hear ourselves sing on the wave! Would you mind telling me why you call Miss Bell, Tink? Sounds painfully like Tinkle in connection with her last name!"

"Guess Barrie thought that too," said Lloyd. "It's in 'Peter Pan,' 'Peter and Wendy.' There's a fairy, Tinker Bell, follows Peter everywhere; stuck on him, you know. And in the play you only see a light that stands for her, and you hear bells, and they show she's around too. I don't know why; I guess because Sylvia's able to do so many things and—I don't know why, sort of hit me to call her Tinker Bell, so I do. But you know 'Peter Pan,' of course; sorry I took so long about it."

"I don't know a thing about 'Peter Pan,' I'm sorry to say, except that there is such a story," Mr. Bell assured him. "But I will look it up. Have we it in the house, Sylvia?"

"It's 'The Little White Bird,' for grown-ups, first; then 'Peter Pan' in Kensington Gardens and 'Peter and Wendy'—that's the story like the play. I have them all; shall I get one of them for you, father?" asked Sylvia, positively quivering with delight.

"One of them? All of them. How do I know which holds the mystery of my being father to a Tink? I must get back to work, couldn't resist coming out to see why you were laughing. Don't forget the sail, girl and boy! O'Malley, your glory is such that it is hard to bear! No man wants to feel insignificant before his child's Irish terrier! Good-bye, all of you!"

Mr. Bell left them. A silence fell upon the group; Lloyd and Ruth looked at each other so surprised that they avoided Sylvia's eyes.

"Why, Tink, he's a peach!" Lloyd burst out at last.

"Oh, of course," Sylvia said carelessly, turning away with a shrug of her shoulders to express the obviousness of Lloyd's statement. But

there was another reason for her turning away, and her carelessness was not convincing.

Sylvia arose with the sun on the second morning, the morning of the first trip which her father had ever taken in *The Walloping Window Blind* by previous plan and intention.

Sylvia had spent the previous afternoon cleaning what was already clean, polishing what did not need polishing on her boat. Lloyd and Ruth helped her; they perceived that this first trip in *The Walloping Window Blind* to gather specimens was something in the nature of an enlistment, and decidedly an Event.

"Father has taken me into the laboratory; now I'll take him into my boat," Sylvia brought herself to say. She could not talk about the joy that flooded her. It lay like a hidden fire, deep within her, but her eyes reflected the glow, and she was blossoming into beauty under its stimulation.

When she came down that morning, dressed in her middie and skirt, her old hat pulled down on her head as usual, she found her father waiting for her, early as it was.

"I have to look like this, fatherums," she said apologetically. "I can't seem to sail decently

unless I look like a tramp—and it's so comfortable! Please don't look at me. I let O'Malley wear his new collar, so one of us will be in full dress. He always sits 'way forward, too!"

"All right, Captain Sylvia. Far be it from me to criticise the first officer of the ship," returned Mr. Bell. "Eben Tompkins is in a state of mind, Sylvia. He has always accompanied me on these specimen hunts. I'm sorry to see the poor fellow miserable and jaundiced. Jealousy is most uncomfortable! We'll have to find a way to heal his wounded feelings—though I can't allow him to show jealousy of you! How much harder human beings are to deal with than our friends, the starfish, the Holothurians, whose type of beauty you don't admire!—and the rest."

"Not all human beings!" said Sylvia, catching up a mackinaw, for the morning was cool, as her father moved toward the steps. She could not waste thought on Eben, then.

"If it hadn't been for Aunt Helen, I'd never made it," Lloyd answered when Mr. Bell approved his, and Ruth's, prompt appearance on the beach. "Ruth called me and I woke up, but I slid right back. When Aunt Helen wakes

me she doesn't stop waking me till she sees it has taken."

"Run the tender down to the water for me; maybe you'll fall asleep here, if you don't exercise," suggested Sylvia.

"No fear, but here goes!" Lloyd replied, and the tender was afloat in no time.

The morning was perfect. Ruffled by a brisk breeze, the waters of the bay sparkled under the level rays of the newly risen sun. Already the hint of near September was in that breeze and the sun's rays were level later than a month ago.

The Walloping Window Blind's preternatural cleanness brought her into unity with the clean new day. O'Malley, at his post beside the mast, emitted gleams of spring-hued greens as he turned his head, and the sunshine struck upon the tourmaline shamrocks in his collar.

"O'Malley's countrymen are quite right; it means a lot to wish any one the top of the morning." Mr. Bell sighed contentedly, stretching out his length of limb, as if to get the full benefit of the warmth all down it. He watched Sylvia from beneath his lids when she did not realise it, and the lines around his lips softened into great tenderness as he saw how skillfully

she manipulated her craft, how bonny she was in spite of her shabby hat, pushed back from her broad forehead, her dark hair blown and waving around her flushed cheeks.

They made fast in a rocky inlet of the bay which Mr. Bell selected as a favourite resort of starfish. They all got out and spent over an hour scrambling upon the slippery rocks, gathering the starfish in their hollow pools, finding the hideous sea cucumbers in the shallow water just beyond the line of a small piece of sandy beach at the head of the inlet, and depositing their captures in Mr. Bell's pails. The two girls shuddered over the soft, repellent Holothurians, but Sylvia heroically "resolved to love them for science's sake—and daddy's," she announced.

"Once more embark, Captain Sylvia," Mr. Bell suggested. "It's all sails set and ho, for home!"

"*All* sails on a catboat is dead easy, Mr. Bell," said Lloyd, who had come to regard Mr. Bell as a boy of the best sort.

Up the bay the little boat sped, lying over in the breeze, cutting her way with her little sharp nose, self-confident and important as the largest superdreadnaught.

"I'm hungry," observed Mr. Bell pathetically.

"Thought you'd be!" Sylvia beamed on him. Every feminine creature is happy when she can feed the masculine folk whom she loves.

"Take the tiller a minute, Lloyd. Steer for that buoy over there; see it? Keep her headed, watch your peak and don't let it flap."

Sylvia sprang up, dropped on her knees and began to burrow in her cuddy. Triumphantly she brought forth a cake, the thermos bottle which held hot coffee, a bag of peaches, cookies, and a box of candy.

"Knew you'd all be starved!" Sylvia said, getting up and brushing her skirt.

"I made that coffee myself. Remember how your aunt taught me, Ruth? Got up and made it at three o'clock! I went back to bed after I'd made it, didn't know how long it might take, hope it's good."

"Long-headed Tink!" Lloyd applauded her.

"You're a thoughtful ship's officer," said her father, considerably refraining from commenting on the extremely girlish selection of unmixed sweets for this collation.

But Sylvia remembered it, and repaired the folly.

"Wait a jiffy! I brought some saltines,"

she cried, diving for them. "I'm afraid Casabianca meant that cake for tea, but that can't be helped. I'll make a peach shortcake if she hasn't anything."

"What is the meaning of all these allusions to cooking, my dear? Are you growing domestic and skillful?" Mr. Bell inquired.

Sylvia nodded. "Growing; not grown!" she said, gloating over her father's manifest satisfaction in the coffee of her own making.

"Do you think that breakfast-luncheon was too heavy to let us sing?" suggested Mr. Bell. Then, without waiting for an answer, he began to sing. College songs, negro melodies, Irish songs—"for O'Malley"—popular songs, old ballads, ragtime, they sang them all. They passed many crafts of various sorts and sizes going out as they came up the harbour, all of which saluted the melodious little catboat, and clapped her singing crew.

Sylvia, finding that Ruth and Lloyd had really "got their sea legs on," and were not in danger of discomfort, put her boat into the wake of every tug she could cross astern, and "*The Walloping Window Blind* walloped in the wake," as Lloyd truly observed.

"It's been the nicest morning, almost, I ever

spent in my life!" Ruth said as they once more came ashore, and she and Lloyd bade Sylvia good-bye, while Mr. Bell patiently waited with a pail in each hand, and his hat politely held in one hand.

"Not much to tell of either, is there?" said Sylvia, nodding. "There never is, sailing, yet it beats everything else. Good-bye. All ready for home, Mr. Bell and Dragoon O'Malley!"

Sylvia joined her father. Suddenly she slapped her skirt with a cry of dismay.

"What's wrong, dear?" Mr. Bell cried, stopping short.

"I took my harmonica and forgot all about it!" cried Sylvia. "I meant to play you the song I composed on it."

"What a shame!" her father said with sympathy that did him honour, considering his private opinion of Sylvia's chosen instrument.

"I didn't realise you were a—I wonder what it is? A Harmonia, possibly? I did not know you played on that somewhat treacherous instrument."

"Gabriel Gaby taught me, as much as you can be taught. I didn't know you sang, fatherums, either," Sylvia replied. "Ruth has a sweet voice, hasn't she?"

"Very. You like her better than any girl who lives here, don't you, Sylvia?" Mr. Bell asked.

"Lots. I don't seem to care much for any of our girls. They're all right, but I don't seem to enjoy them. Ruth's a nice little thing; I do like her. She wants me to visit her this winter." Sylvia fingered her harmonica as she spoke.

"You shall, if it's possible, and there's no reason why it shouldn't be," Mr. Bell said heartily.

"Well, of course, but I'll be pretty well driven for time, what with learning in the laboratory, and learning in the house," said Sylvia.

"I wish you had young comrades, my dear; I'm sorry these nice Hapgood children are going away. You'll miss them?" Mr. Bell looked troubled as he asked it.

"Yes, I suppose so," said Sylvia indifferently. "Of course it isn't as it was when—" She checked herself.

"When I was stupidly blind to my own daughter-comrade?" suggested Mr. Bell.

Sylvia nodded hard. "I don't need any one now," she said.

"Let me play my tune to you, father. I

think I'll call it 'The Holothurians' Hallo,' because you do seem to like those horrible sea cucumbers, and I loathe them!"

They went the remainder of the way up the beach to the accompaniment of Sylvia's happy piping, and of the silent thoughts with which her father watched her, at once so childish, and so fully his womanly and adoring daughter.

CHAPTER XVII

THE LADY OF THE HOUSE

September came with its days of dreaming haze, preparing the earth for its final transformation scene.

It carried Ruth and Lloyd Hapgood away in its passing. Sylvia was surprised and a little ashamed to find that she scarcely missed them, fond as she surely was of them both.

Ruth had gone away consoled by a promise from Sylvia to visit her in the winter, if it were possible. Ruth's feeling for Sylvia was not merely love; she regarded the girl as an embodiment of her ideal of girlhood, a sort of combination of princess, maiden knight, genius, and warm-heartedness, to which Sylvia, under Ruth's Aunt Helen, was fast adding domesticity. Sylvia was truly fond of Ruth, but Ruth worshipped Sylvia.

As to Lloyd he merely said that "Sylvia was all right," including perhaps just as much in that laconic statement as Ruth did in her raptures to her aunt over her friend's number-

less glories. Sylvia liked Lloyd as well as he did her; sometimes she feared that she liked him the least bit more than she did Ruth, because his friendship exacted less of her.

Lloyd wrung her hand at parting and said merely: "So long, Tink. Great old summer, wasn't it? Much obliged for all you did for me."

Ruth shed bitter tears and clung to Sylvia, repeatedly returning to kiss her good-bye again.

Sylvia choked when she returned Lloyd's handclasp and said: "Good-bye, Lloyd; good luck. Nonsense! I didn't do a thing! I'd like to know who stood by me when I was in up to my ears in worry."

She cried with Ruth, both because she felt like crying on her own account, and because Ruth's grief was infectious.

But when the Hapgoods were gone, Sylvia was shocked to discover that she had gone to her work in her father's laboratory with no less alacrity than on other days, and had worked over her tasks there for nearly two hours without once reverting to the recent parting.

"I must be a beast," she said disgustedly to herself. "I do care, but I don't seem to! Yes, I do care, but I care above all things for home

and my father! After all, that isn't being a beast!" she added in her thoughts, comforted by her clear-eyed justice in judging even herself.

Sylvia's work in the laboratory had ceased to be a novelty, had ceased, also, to be in the least a pastime. She understood now all that she did; she had her appointed tasks and performed them deftly, with absorbed interest, first, for her father's sake, but also for their own. Her keen mind followed eagerly the bait held before it in these experiments, knowledge and ever more knowledge. Science interested her, as it must interest any one who loves fairy tales, not only the exact scientific mind.

With her laboratory work, Sylvia was learning to do and to be what every woman must do, and be, who hopes to pass through life with a serene and sunny mind, blessing others and being blessed; she was learning the housewifely arts, learning to be a home-maker.

Now that the Hapgoods were gone, Sylvia went more, rather than less, to the house where they had stayed. Mrs. Leveritt had grown to love Sylvia tenderly, and the girl returned her love with interest. The relation between them counted for a great deal in the development of Sylvia that autumn. Dear as her father was

to her, Sylvia needed the mother whom she had lost, and this lack Mrs. Leveritt's beautiful influence supplied. Sylvia was growing older fast, and it was greatly due to Mrs. Leveritt that she was maturing in precisely the way that was best.

The Bell house began to take on a more home-like look. Sylvia permeated it, transformed it by a thousand trifling touches. It had lacked the look of hominess; the look of intimacy with its occupants that a real home has, but this look was fast coming over it, as its young daughter grew to see it with eyes which really saw.

Cassandra Billings fervently thanked heaven in her thoughts for Sylvia's sudden, yet permanent interest in the things for which Cassandra had long despaired of her caring. Sylvia could make biscuits now that no one could surpass; her cake was a constant boast of Cassandra's—outside the house!

She understood how to do all sorts of delightful things in the way of table adorning, with delicacies and with decorations. She was beginning to sew quite well; Cassandra had found a needle nearly as formidable as a bayonet hitherto, when Sylvia was urged to use one.

Sylvia still put on shabby clothes and sailed

and roamed, but there was less time for it, she was less restless. Her days were crowded, and such days must pass rapidly and happily.

No one had ever been able to coax Sylvia to work to acquire musical skill.

She was taught the piano, but shirked practise with all her might. She had talent, and she could play fairly, thanks to her true ear, but work for it she would not.

Now Sylvia practised faithfully every day, though sometimes the practise could not be long.

Cassandra once ventured to allude to this reform, cautiously, for she held that virtue often took wing if any one commended it.

"You'd never practise before, Miss Sylvia," she said, conveying blame with the commendation.

"I didn't know my father sang," Sylvia replied, as if this were more than sufficient explanation.

"Doin' it to play for him!" thought Cassandra, enlightened. "How the child does worship him!"

Eben Tompkins had yielded at last to Sylvia's charm. She had captured him as if he had been a fly, with sweetness, spread on patience.

Never did she notice his surliness, never did she fail to answer his grumpiness with her sunny mirth, never forgot to turn out for the many protuberances of his extremely knotty disposition. At last Eben fairly gave in, and, having given in, made honourable amend, as persons of his sort usually do.

"I may as well inform you, Mr. Bell," he said one day, "that Miss Sylvia Bell is no drawback to me in the laboratory, as I expected she would be. I consider her a considerable gain in the way of pleasantness, and there's no denying she works good, not mussy, never leaves cleaning up after her. I'd prefer her here to not. Felt it was fair to say so."

"Thank you, Eben; that's good to hear. I personally think that my tall little girl makes sunshine around her everywhere. Don't you think I'm right in feeling that the starfish are not the only creatures who put out new growths under her fostering care?" Mr. Bell answered.

"Meaning us, Mr. Bell? I must say I think you're pretty near right," Eben acknowledged.

Thus sped by absorbing interests and increasing happiness, September of that important summer fled away, and October came, turned

the world into a glory of wind and flame, opened the burs and dropped the hickory nuts, loosened the leaves it had dyed in the concentrated beauty of the year, sent them downward in long gusts of rain-burdened gales, and made ready for November's near approach.

"Father dearest, I had a letter from Aunt Emily to-day. She's coming on Saturday," Sylvia told her father at dinner one night in the beginning of October's last week.

"Is she?" Mr. Bell asked. He had been awakened to Sylvia's needs at his sister's previous coming. He did not realise how the girl dreaded her aunt's unsympathetic presence in their little paradise of two. However well-intentioned Miss Bell might be, she was so unfortunate as to rub up the wrong way every one with whom she came into close contact.

"Yes, she's coming," sighed Sylvia. "I wonder—"

But she did not say what it was that was uncertain, and her father did not ask.

Later, Sylvia told her doubt to Cassandra Billings.

"You see, Cassie," she said, "I dreaded Aunt Emily before because she bothered me; I hated to be lectured. But in another way I didn't

mind about her, because I was nowhere near doing what she liked me to do. I looked shabbier, and was more a tomboy when she was here than when she wasn't; she made me reckless. Now I'm trying to be 'a real little lady,' as she always said—Cassie, do you think anybody in this world ever wanted to be good when she was told: Now be a good little girl! Or: Be a real little lady! Or—worst of all!—Take this nice medicine, like a dear child!—when you know and whoever says that knows, it's horrid medicine! Do you think it ever does anything but stir up a kind of contrary black imp in you?"

"Well, Miss Sylvia," said Cassandra, "I am of the opinion that truth should be spoken when speakin' has to be done, and I must say that kind of encouragin' tone always discouraged any child I ever saw it tried on."

"Of course! And Aunt Emily did so exasperate me when I was little! She smoothed me over so rumpling! I suppose now she—yes, she will! What I was going to say, Cassie, was that I mind her now, when I'm doing the things she'd like, much more than I did when I let them all beautifully alone! Isn't that queer?" Sylvia frowned over the problem.

"Oh, I don't know. You wouldn't mind people sayin' you flatted your notes, if you didn't ever try to sing," said Cassandra.

"Cassandra Billings, you ought to have been a Grecian oracle!" Sylvia cried. "Once in a while you hit the nail on the head so hard that other heads catch a spark from the blow! Of course that's it. You can't fail, if you don't try, and if you do try, you hate to fail."

"That's what I meant, child. But 's far 's that goes, you ain't failin', but quite the contrary, no matter what anybody says." Cassandra spoke with so much feeling that Sylvia realised with relief that she would have a special pleader before the court of Miss Emily Bell.

Sylvia dressed with especial care and a mischievous sense of effect, to receive her aunt, who was arriving shortly before noon on Saturday.

She arranged her heavy masses of hair in her new manner, which kept the simplicity suitable to her years, yet suggested that she was growing out of it; Sylvia was pleased with this effect, and patted the dark braids, nestling in the nape of her neck, with approval that was not vanity, but satisfaction.

She put on a dark blue serge dress, made in one piece, plain, but with slight touches of knowing design on which Sylvia pardonably prided herself, for this little house gown was her first dressmaking, wrought with no little effort, through despairing moments, under Mrs. Leveritt's patient instruction.

Sylvia smoothed its white Georgette crêpe collar and cuffs, pinning the collar demurely below the curves of her slender throat.

"Maybe Aunt Emily will think I've become a deaconess! At least she must think I look more like 'a little lady' than I did. And, oh, if she only will ask where I got this dress!" thought Sylvia, giving her double in the glass a tiny wink, so tiny as to be pardonable, and twisting her shoulder almost to dislocation to get the effect of the back of her collar.

Miss Bell drove up from the station in a public carriage, one of the sort that used to be called "a carryall," of which this example was a survival, turning greyish as to its paint, and greenish as to its upholstery.

When she entered the library, to which she first turned, being cold and counting on finding a fire blazing, as usual, on its hearth, a tall figure arose from the depths of a sleepy hollow

chair, and came forward to greet her. For an instant she did not recognise it in its new, severely correct decorum of air and attire. Then she exclaimed: "Why, Sylvia! Is it possible? You are growing up! And you are greatly improved by it."

"That's good, Aunt Emily," said Sylvia, presenting her cheek to her aunt's swift kiss. "I think I'm no taller, but I may be more grown up, if not more grown."

"You are," affirmed Miss Bell, eyeing Sylvia with her old critical scrutiny, combined with a dawning new approval.

"She is extremely pretty; I'm not sure she isn't going to be beautiful. I wonder what gives her this new expression of content? Her smile is radiantly lovely," thought Miss Bell, rapidly receiving impressions of this new Sylvia. But she did not express anything that she thought; she did imply it by asking: "Where did you get that little house gown, Sylvia? I never bought it for you. It is rather smart, so plain and refined. Quite becoming, too."

"I made it, Aunt Emily," said Sylvia demurely. But she had hard work to hide her keen enjoyment of the effect of her words.

"You! Made it? Made that dress? You

couldn't; you can't sew. Who cut it?" cried her aunt, so astonished that she did not realise that she was accusing Sylvia of falsehood.

"Oh, yes, I made it, Aunt Emily, really," Sylvia persisted. "I knew how to sew long ago; the trouble was I knew how not to sew! I got out of doing it. But lately I've been interested in it. Mrs. Leveritt showed me how to make this dress. I cut it out, one of those paper patterns, you know, with perforations and numbers to make you do it right—and go crazy laying it on! Glad you think it's nice. Are you cold still? Are you ready to go up to your room? Or would you rather sit by the fire awhile?"

"Quite ready to go up, Sylvia," said Miss Bell.

She gathered up her muff, fur collar, bag purse, handkerchief, a book, and a package, then arose. Immediately she began dropping these things, one at a time, but most of them fell in turn as she received back another from Sylvia. Aunt Emily had this sort of nervous helplessness, Sylvia remembered, in spite of her generalship and she never permitted any one to carry her small belongings for her.

Sylvia established her aunt in her customary

quarters, and stood for an instant taking a rapid inventory of its order, to make sure that nothing lacked. She saw her aunt watching her with ill-concealed amazement, and laughed.

"Yes, I was making sure everything was all right, Aunt Emily. I'm housekeeping—a little bit. Not very well, you know; not more than enough for a two-room house, maybe, but a little housekeeping! I'm going to put dessert together; I made a two-part dessert, Aunt Emily, and it's got to unite, because divided it will fall—it's a *méringue*! Will you come down when you're ready?" Sylvia said.

"For pity's sake!" murmured Miss Bell, as Sylvia left the room and ran singing down the stairs. "Fancy Sylvia behaving like a hostess and looking after the arrangement of my room! *Sylvia!* I must go down and talk with Cassandra. I've got to be told what has happened in this house."

Miss Bell had no opportunity to carry out her plan before dinner. That meal was pleasantly passed by her in conversation with her brother, whom she found unexplainably enlivened and drawn out of the shell in which he had sheltered after the sorrow which overwhelmed him in the death of his wife.

Sylvia did not try to talk. She sat bright-eyed and contented, listening. Occasionally Mr. Bell turned to her with a smile to which Sylvia responded with a look of such happy intimacy that Miss Bell wondered more than ever.

The *méringue* was uncommonly good.

"Did I understand you to say you made this dessert, Sylvia?" Miss Bell asked, and Sylvia said: "Yes, Aunt Emily," so meekly that her aunt could not suspect how hard it was for her not to laugh.

In the afternoon Sylvia was missing; Miss Bell looked for her in vain, desiring to go over with her the plans which she had made for her wardrobe and where it was to be worn that winter. Miss Bell had decided that her niece was to be uprooted from her home and borne away by her to be made into a young lady by competent hands, in a fashionable school. It never occurred to Miss Bell to look for Sylvia in her father's formerly impenetrable laboratory; she decided that "Sylvia was off on one of her unladylike pursuits," and sought Cassandra Billings to glean from her the history of the changed atmosphere which she felt in the house.

Cassandra was primed and ready. Miss Bell

heard such a mixed story of counterfeiters, capture, science, laboratory work, sewing, house-keeping, cooking, music, that it produced in her orderly mind quite the opposite effect from the one Cassandra had intended to produce.

"Cassandra! Horrible!" Miss Bell cried, holding up her hands. "Fancy my niece hunting down criminals, actually sailing them to prison in her boat! And think of a girl, *a girl*, working in a laboratory, a fishy sort of laboratory! Faugh! It's perfectly inconceivable! I wonder at my brother. But of course he never has been in the least like any one else, and that unfortunate child of his is still less like any one else—any other girl—than he is. First he indifferently let her run wild; did not seem aware of her at all as a growing girl, and then he lets her do the most repulsive, unladylike things! I am resolved now, much more than ever, to take Sylvia with me this winter. I am not pleased to find her doing the things that would once have delighted me in her, taking an interest in womanly tasks, because it is completely spoiled by this horrible report you've given me. Oh dear; I'll do my duty, of course, but it is hard, very hard, on a person of my sort to be burdened with this responsibility. Because, Cas-

sandra, I am old-fashioned; I hope that I am a conventional gentlewoman, and Sylvia shocks me, yet I so far have been powerless to correct her frightful misfortunes."

Cassandra Billings was privileged; her care of Mr. Bell's household dated from the time when Sylvia was born and her mother had died. She laughed now, looking at Miss Bell with a gleam in her neutral-tinted eyes.

"Well, Miss Emily," she said, "takin' Sylvia Bell all in all, seems to me I've seen things that would shock me more'n her ways, and it does look to me 's if her misfortunes were gettin' corrected without interference, corrected so 's 't lots of folks couldn't tell 'em from the best of good fortune."

It was a pity that the ill-fated O'Malley, whose evil star led him to errors of judgment when Miss Bell was there, found himself unbearably lonely that afternoon, and went up to his mistress' chamber as the next best consolation to finding his mistress herself. O'Malley regretted deeply Sylvia's scientific turn; the laboratory daily deprived him of her for hours. When his loneliness ate too far into his endurance, O'Malley betook himself to Sylvia's room, where that indulgent young person al-

lowed him to lie on her couch. The pillows redolent of her comforted him till she came, the blanket she spread for his benefit was warm. O'Malley found himself able to take a nap here and thus shorten the moments of his conscious longing.

This afternoon O'Malley found particularly void, and he went up to his refuge, mounted the couch, scratched the blanket into a heap, sighed as he curled himself into a mat, and forgot his trouble in profound slumber in less than five minutes.

Sylvia came into the house an hour later and ran up to her room. Her aunt, hearing her coming, met her in the hall; they entered Sylvia's room together.

"Sylvia, look at that!" cried Miss Bell, dramatically pointing at O'Malley, who from his rapturous leap to greet his mistress, shrank into abashed perception of her aunt's gesture.

"O'Malley? What about him, Aunt Emily? Come here, my Irish Dragoon, come see me!" cried Sylvia.

"On your couch!" protested Miss Bell. "That dog! A dog's place is in the barn. Do you see, Sylvia, that no one can approve of your life here, however you may improve in one or

two ways? I have heard with horror, actually with horror, that you are playing at science in that impossible, untidy laboratory, and that your father allows it! But he never has been the least bit a father to you! I shall talk to him at once; you must be trained into civilised ways. I shall succeed this time, I am sure, in taking you with me and placing you under proper influences."

Miss Bell drew herself up and regarded Sylvia with the triumph of good over evil.

"Oh, Aunt Emily," cried Sylvia, wrath and despair in her flashing eyes, "why, why won't you let me alone? I'm so happy I can't hold the half of it, and I'm learning the very things you always said I ought to know, and—and—father is a father to me! You say such awful things, and you know I can't tell you exactly all they make me feel, because I'd be impertinent. And I think that's taking advantage of me; it isn't fair! And everything is perfectly beautiful for me now, just wonderful. Yet you don't like it any better than before. Nor O'Malley; you always object to O'Malley! And O'Malley's place is not the barn, but with me! You treasure!"

This remark was flung at O'Malley with a hug, both of which he received ecstatically.

"How can you, how can you, so much as think of taking me away? I've never been at home before in all my life! I'd think you'd be so glad for me, you'd bar all the roads that led away from the house! Oh, Aunt Emily, why do you so disapprove of me? I've tried to be so ladylike this time, and wasn't my *méringue* good, honestly, wasn't it? And the laboratory— Oh, well, you wouldn't see, so what's the use? But to be helping father in scientific work, really helping, and in real work, isn't that far, far more than being ladylike, only? And I'm really much nicer in that way too than I was, *much!* It's so trying!" Sylvia cried, fire and extinguishing tears in her eyes at the same time.

"Sylvia, you are the one who cannot see. I should not hope for it, brought up as you were," said Miss Bell firmly. "I shall do my best with your father."

"Oh, well, it can't harm anything. I've been doing my best for a good while. I think, after all, Aunt Emily, you'd better talk to him. But I do wish you could love me, and never mind things, Aunt Emily. You'll find father does. He doesn't mind my faults. He doesn't mind my being the kind of girl I am. Why,

he doesn't mind my not being the boy I am not! Not now. And he always wanted a son. That's why I'm going to be really his daughter."

Sylvia ended this triumph of contradiction in a burst of excited crying, dropping on the floor with both arms hugging O'Malley to her heart, hurt by her aunt's persistent fault-finding when she had tried so hard to improve, yet so glad of her security in her father's loving need of her that if the tears falling from her left eye were drawn by a pang, those which rained from her right eye were drawn from deep springs of joy.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN HARBOUR

In the Middle Ages, when wars were the business of the day, and justice or revenge were in the hands of individuals oftener than they were laid before the king, Sunday brought a truce to contests, and, from its coming to its going, its hours were a sanctuary of refuge to the persecuted.

The next day was Sunday, and Sylvia heard no more from her aunt of her deficiencies, nor of an appeal to her father to take from him, for her greater good, the girl whom he had so lately learned to know intimately and to depend upon.

Miss Bell behaved toward Sylvia with a sort of melancholy politeness that puzzled her greatly. It was as if Sylvia were afflicted with a fatal disease which she herself knew nothing about, but which her aunt had correctly diagnosed as about to terminate her brief life.

Sylvia was sure that Miss Bell had not laid before her father the desperate danger of her

case during the day, because there had been no time for it.

Miss Bell never omitted church-going, and, when she visited her brother, she also made a point of inspecting the Sunday School, which she chose to consider in need of keying up to city standards of its work.

Mr. Bell and Sylvia went together to another church in the morning, and in the afternoon read aloud to each other, by turns, Dante's "Divina Commedia." Mr. Bell had, for his young daughter's sake, returned to his old love of the poets, which they read together. It hardly seemed as though Aunt Emily were wholly right in thinking that Sylvia's education were going completely wrong.

That evening, however, Sylvia, returning from the walk which she had not the heart to refuse to O'Malley's pleading, heard her aunt's voice in the library, rising at times in tones of stern remonstrance, flowing in a steady stream of sound, rarely broken by a few words from her father.

"Charles O'Malley, the Irish Dragoon, by Charles Lever, my tried and true friend, that means *ME!* Those many words, which we can't hear, darling, are all about your poor, bad

mistress, whose only excuse is that she was allowed to run wild, and had no one to civilise her! And yet, dog of the world, in that very room I've read and read the greatest books! And— But, you see, Dragoon of my Heart, I love to sail a boat and tear around in old clothes, and I am intimate with you, my wild Irish boy! So I'm a savage, O'Malley, an aborigine! Never mind; you'll love me still! Come on up to my room, doggums; we've got to keep away while we're having things said about us. Aren't you glad, you plummy thing, that this time we aren't afraid father will listen to it? Remember last time how I hauled you to him, and he took our part? Even then, O'Malley, father did stand up for us, and we hadn't got intimate with him yet! And we were afraid I'd be sent off to school, weren't we? But this time we know our beloved Clement Bell wouldn't get rid of us for a kingdom! So let's go upstairs with peaceful minds, O'Malley! It's pretty fine to know you're riding at anchor in your own harbour, not afraid of any gale that blows!"

Sylvia had talked to the delighted O'Malley while she divested herself of her outer garments, and then she ran up to her own room, pulled

her couch out under the droplight, took from her bookshelves "Captains Courageous," and curled down to an evening's reading.

O'Malley jumped up on her feet, without waiting for an invitation, then wormed himself up till he had arrived in the hollow of her left arm, into which he compactly fitted himself, and Sylvia slipped her fingers under the dog's collar and rubbed his neck as she read.

She had read "Captains Courageous" so many times that she knew it almost to the reciting point, but it never lost its spell upon her sea-born imagination.

To-night, however, it was not so enthralling as usual. It was impossible, although she was sure that her father would not harken to his elder sister's advice, to lose herself in the story, knowing that she was the subject of the conversation going on in the room beneath hers.

It was after ten o'clock when her aunt's voice called her: "Sylvia! Sylvia, come down, child. We are going to have a small supper. Won't you join us?"

Sylvia thought that the voice had a new tone in it. She hastily obeyed its summons, so hastily that she caused O'Malley considerable inconvenience.

Mr. Bell looked disturbed, Sylvia thought, when she came into the library. There was a flush on his cheeks, and his eyes were bright. He came to meet Sylvia, and tucked her hand into his arm.

“‘On a morsel of cheese and a very few peas I was having a little carouse, ma’am,’” he quoted. “We want a bite to go to sleep on, your aunt and I, and we thought the Head of the House would know what to recommend.”

Quick to catch impressions, Sylvia felt the emotion which had stirred her father.

She glanced at Aunt Emily. She, too, looked disturbed. Sylvia felt sure that there had been tears on her cheeks not long before.

“Father has told her; father has made her understand!” thought the girl with a leap of her heart.

“There are sardines, and there is some particularly nice lettuce in the cellar, father, and there is cake,” Sylvia tried to reply to her father’s words with her tongue, while her arm responded to the pressure of his hand upon it.

“I could make coffee for you, or chocolate?”

“No coffee at bedtime, Sylvia, and chocolate is too heavy. Hot water for me, if the fire is up,” said Miss Bell.

"Susie keeps a fire in the range, but it is banked for the night now, I suppose. We use the gas stove for these things," said Sylvia. "Please excuse me while I get an apron; I'll not be a minute."

She ran away on her errand, and her father looked significantly at his sister.

"Yes, you're right; she is interested in her home. Clement, I believe you are right in other ways. I am thankful you have her, that she means so much to you now. I never realised that you had missed her mother all this time, I thought your work made up to you. I'm glad you told me, and— That's a sensible apron, Sylvia; covers you up well." Miss Bell turned to Sylvia as she came back into the room, hastily getting away from the previous theme.

"Yes, Aunt Emily. Mrs. Leveritt cut it for me; I made it," Sylvia said, buttoning the ample covering about her, hiding her delicate blue gown. "Seems to me I'm always telling you that Mrs. Leveritt did something, or taught me something, Aunt Emily! But she is always helping me. She's so dear and sweet, and good! Don't you know; the kind of person that does almost as much good to you when she

doesn't do anything, as when she does; just by being herself!"

"I suppose perhaps I don't know, Sylvia," Miss Bell said with unwonted meekness. "I think I shall go home to-morrow; do you suppose you could bring yourself to pay me a visit this winter? I shall never again suggest your leaving home for long."

"Why, of course, Aunt Emily!" cried Sylvia, taking a step or two toward her aunt, in whom she felt the surrender that instantly appealed to her great, generous heart.

"I promised to visit Ruth Hapgood. I could go to see you then. Thank you, Auntie; it's kind of you to want me to come."

Miss Bell did go away the next day, late in the afternoon.

She did not tell Sylvia a word of what had passed between her brother and herself, but her manner to the girl was completely changed.

"Good-bye, my dear," she said in parting. "Whatever I may have said to you, please believe that I meant well by you. And I find you greatly improved, greatly. I am glad that you are growing up to be a comfort to your father. I think I may have been wrong about

the laboratory work; Clement assures me that it is not untidy, nor unpleasant. Perhaps if it were, it would still be your privilege to help him. Good-bye; I shall count upon your visit in the winter."

That night Mr. Bell drew Sylvia to him as she perched upon the arm of his chair, before the driftwood fire of beautiful colours, blazing upon the library hearth.

"Girl-of-mine, it is time to get your boat beached and made weather-safe for the winter," he said. "It is cold."

"Father, you took my words away—not fair!" cried Sylvia. "The smelts are biting well. Gabriel Gaby says they're catching them like mad. I was going to ask you if you didn't want to go out for the last sail of the season, fish a little, and come in—and get warm! Probably we'd need to! But let's have one more sail, then good-bye to *The Walloping Window Blind* and the lovely bay till spring! Gabriel is going to pull her up by Saturday."

"Pretty cold sailing, little buccaneer!" Mr. Bell shuddered. "However, I'll go, if you want to. Sylvia, do I spoil you? It strikes me you're rather nice; am I wrong? You know girls of your age better than I do. Honest truth,

Laboratory Assistant, how do your bringing up and its results strike you?"

"Father, it's good!" Sylvia promptly assured him. "I haven't the pretty accomplishments girls have, but then I can do lots they can't, and I've read heaps more. And I'm interested in real things. I wouldn't change with them, not I! It's all right. Don't you worry. Aunt Emily mustn't bother you. Fatherums, I'm going to say something dreadful! That's another thing about my training; I say what I think more than the girls I know do. Father, this is it: Can't you let me—well, finish myself now? Can't I buy my clothes, and—and—not have Aunt Emily feel any responsibility for me? It seems to be hard on her, too."

"Too? That means it's hard on you?" asked Mr. Bell.

"She means well, but—" Sylvia stopped.

"Yes, I know; she takes it hard, and makes it hard," Mr. Bell agreed. "Emily is one of those persons who can't trust goodness to be attractive; she feels it must be sternly administered. I know; I recall that I found her wearing when I was a small boy. She is fifteen years older than I, you know. She's an excellent

woman, but it is trying to be run in a mould, especially if its design doesn't suit your material. Emily will not interfere with you as she has done, Sylvia; I can promise that. I am quite willing that you should buy your own clothes, my dear. Suppose I allowance you? Then you can be perfectly independent. You are the mistress of my house, my daughter, also of my heart!"

Sylvia's father made a dramatic gesture toward his heart, to prevent the outburst of feeling he dreaded from his emotional daughter!

"Oh, how beautiful!" breathed Sylvia rapturously. "I shall be nothing but ME!"

"Nothing else, I assure you!" Mr. Bell laughed. "Unless it is Captain Sylvia?"

"One thing more, father, just one thing! Would you care if I didn't sit at the side of the table, but took the head of it, and made the coffee mornings in the percolator, the alcohol percolator?" Sylvia asked the question with visibly bated breath.

Her father tipped back his head and laughed heartily.

"Dear child, I beg your pardon! Where else should the Head of the House sit except at the head of the table! It was stupid of me not to

place you there before. But the specification of the alcohol percolator is rather funny! You are a little girl still, tall daughter! I am glad of that!" he cried.

Sylvia sprang from the arm of her father's chair and danced wildly around the room.

" 'Oh, I'm a cook and a captain bold,
And the mate of the Nancy brig;
And the bo'sun tight, and the midshipmite,
And the crew of the captain's gig,' "

she sang at the top of her voice, capering so recklessly that O'Malley, resting from a day that had been strenuous on account of a neighbour's dog, aroused from needed slumber and joined in her dance with shrill barking.

Sylvia stopped behind her father's chair, bending forward, her hands on its back, eluding his grasp as he tried to catch her. She bent over, depositing a swift kiss on the top of his head, and jumped back again, out of reach.

"I'm going to be a scientist, a housewife, a boofer lady—like Bella Wilfer!—a sempstress, a well-read person, and—and Captain Sylvia! Just to celebrate my happy lot, fatherums! You'll be so proud of me! It's as if I were dared to be all that your daughter ought to be. And no one can take a dare, you know! So I've

got to try to succeed." Sylvia laughed, but her father knew that she was in deadly earnest.

"Going to be all things to all men, is that it, Conceited Lady?" asked her father.

"No. All things to one man. And it isn't conceit," said Sylvia softly, which Mr. Bell perfectly well knew.

The next day Sylvia came flying downstairs with her customary speed. She wore a knitted cap, pulled down over her head, close to her eyebrows. A thick soft sweater of the same greyish blue as the cap was buttoned up to her chin. Her lovely blue eyes looked bluer than ever in this surrounding, her face was alight with content and fun.

"Sing ho, sing hey, for the chilly, chilly bay!" she carolled, inspired to an Elizabethan sort of song, but getting no farther with it.

"Mr. Clement Bell, be sure to bundle well!"

"Sylvia, my dear, it's dismaying to set out with a skipper whose mind is going! Why this rhyming mania? I hope you won't get worse and capsized me? It surely is 'a chilly, chilly bay.' I've put on everything I could lay my hands on, except my bedding, and I didn't see the way to button on the mattress." Mr. Bell emerged from his room and Sylvia saw that he

had put on everything he could wear; he was enlarged bulgingly in all directions.

"You know I'm a cold creature," he added. "I hope you are warmly clad; you move suspiciously freely. I can hardly bend."

"Oh, poor little father! So cold, and stiff, too; two kinds of stiffness! Aren't you going to fish for smelts? Where's your line?" cried Sylvia.

"No. I'm going to keep my hands deep in my pockets," declared Mr. Bell. "I don't care about smelts, anyway."

"Nor I!" cried Sylvia, tossing her line on the hall chair. "I just suggested fishing to get you out with me for the last sail of the season."

The wind was high; it blew cuttingly sharp from the north-west. O'Malley shivered beside the mast, then came aft and tried to get under Sylvia's skirt, as *The Walloping Window Blind* lay over and cut through the water, sending the spray back over her passengers.

Sylvia's face was reddened by the cold, her eyes shone through a salt mist driven into them by the wind as the sea foam arose around the bow of her boat. Her hair slapped her face in long wisps escaped from its pins, and from under her cap, which she pushed around once

in a while, forgetting the damage she thus did. She looked badly tousled, extremely cold, but exceedingly happy. Several times her father started to suggest returning, but could not bring himself to curtail her pleasure.

At last he said: "Do you think it will require a long sail to bid the boat good-bye for this season, Sylvia?"

"We'll come about this minute, father; I'm sorry. It's nice, though, isn't it? Viking wind and weather," Sylvia said. "I'm going to run ashore, instead of mooring her. Gabriel told me to. He'll go out after the tender later. I'm to beach *The Walloping Window Blind* in front of his shack; he'll pull her up and tuck her in warm for the winter."

Sylvia stood up as she put her helm hard down and brought her boat around safely, in spite of the strong wind. Her father watched her absorbed face, her quick, sure movements, her quiet triumph as she sank back into her place, the feat accomplished.

"A noble girl," he thought, appraising Sylvia at her value, not as his own child.

Then the old lines crossed his mind:

"A perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort and command."

"My girl will grow into that," he thought. "Fearless, pure, strong and loving; I'm thankful for the gift of her."

"Do you see something ahead, floating?" asked Sylvia. "O'Malley, what's that?"

Both of her passengers responded to her call. Mr. Bell squinted across the sunlit water, and O'Malley jumped up on the seat beside him, and frantically looked in every direction. It was O'Malley who first made out the object which Sylvia had noted. He barked and whined and twisted himself, looking up to Sylvia the while, as if he asked her how she expected him to bear it.

"I thought so, too, O'Malley!" Sylvia cried. "Father, what do you think?"

"Well, my dear, I'm not in a position to say whether I agree with your opinion and O'Malley's or not. I haven't heard either of you say distinctly what you thought the floating thing was. I don't mind saying that I've no idea, myself, what it is."

"A cat, I think; so does O'Malley," cried Sylvia, and O'Malley confirmed her when he heard the word.

"Somebody's cat has floated off on a board, or something. I'm going to try to overhaul

her, save her. We've got to save her, father! Will you take the helm and let me do the catching? I'm more used to it." Sylvia's excitement grew.

"I'm out of practise handling a boat, Sylvia. You luff up for the cat, and I'll try to catch her. I can do that better than the other." Mr. Bell prepared to lie out along the deck, sharing Sylvia's excitement.

"All right, but for pity's sake don't miss her! She'll die, you know, if we don't get her. I'm pretty sure it's Gabriel's Mate!" Sylvia said. "O'Malley, be quiet. You'll frighten her if you bark. Lie down again, O'Malley, dear; it's a medal for you if I save her. I'll present it!"

Sylvia shut her lips tight and put all her mind on her steering. O'Malley obediently lay down, but he whined ceaselessly in a subdued way.

Mr. Bell lay on the edge of the deck, holding himself with his left hand, his right hand bared, ready to grab poor frightened Mate, whose dilated eyes were horror-filled as the boat swooped down upon her rapidly, threatening to drown her.

Sylvia let her boat come almost upon the box on the bottom of which they now saw Mate

was clinging. Then, with a daring stroke, Sylvia pushed the rudder hard down, let the boat swing off. Mercifully she did not jibe, nor did the suddenly released boom hit little Mate, crouching, clinging, trembling.

Mr. Bell's arm shot out, Mate rose high in the air, made a half circle, and dropped safe into the standing room of the catboat, while O'Malley rose, trembling with excitement, and his mistress did the same.

"Oh, we've got her! 'Tis Mate! Isn't that great? Gabriel is so fond of her. Can you dry her, and warm her, father, while I get back on our course?" cried Sylvia, putting about.

Mr. Bell lifted the shivering cat gently, rubbing her fur with his woollen glove, put her carefully inside his coat.

"A small thing to face the great ocean alone, aren't you, little lady?" he asked, so pityingly that Sylvia felt her heart go out to him as if she had never known him before.

"Father, it's what I love best, to be strong, and yet tender to little, little things, that lots of people overlook," she cried impetuously. "I've got to tell you something; I've long thought I ought to 'fess it! When you used to

be so—buried!—I used to wonder how my mother learned to love you. Now I know!”

“Don’t you think, possibly, love of her—and love of you—taught me tenderness? It seems to me we learn to pity and to love all little living things through love for great, living creatures, Sylvia,” said Mr. Bell.

“I should think that would be one way,” said Sylvia. “I always loved them because they were so dear, and because I didn’t have—” She checked herself with a frightened look.

“Poor little lonely child!” said her father. “I’m sorry.”

“Oh, no! I’m sorry! It doesn’t matter. I was just as jolly as a cricket, in spite of wishing, a little bit! And nothing matters now. I’m happier than any one else in the world.”

Sylvia did not speak again. She sat with a blissful look on her wind-smitten face, sailing her boat inshore for the last time in that eventful year.

Standing up in her place, the tiller held between her knees as a boy would hold it, she steered straight for the beach. Mr. Bell was still warming Mate beneath his coat.

Sylvia let out her sail, the boat came on at a good speed, with a sufficient headway to drive

her well inshore. Gabriel Gaby's shack stood straight before them. In front of it sat Gabriel, clasping his knees, despondency clearly indicated by his position. He did not rise as the boat came in.

"Mourning Mate!" said Sylvia, pointing to him. "Poor old Gabriel! She's all he has. He thinks she drifted out to sea."

The Walloping Window Blind grounded with a force that drove her up on the sand, her keel buried.

"Heigh-ho, Gabriel! I've brought her in to you," called Sylvia, as she sprang over the rail, followed by her father, and almost tripped up by O'Malley.

"I'll 'tend to her, Sylvie," said Gabriel dispiritedly.

Mr. Bell opened his coat and displayed Mate, dry, and beginning to cease trembling.

Before he could speak Gabriel Gaby sprang up with a shrill cry.

"Mate, as I'm a sinner!" he cried. "Mate, when I thought she'd gone down on me! Oh, come right here, my little Matie! Your poor old daddy thought you'd drowned!"

It was funny, yet pathetic. The old sailor's voice quivered with emotion, he took his cat

in his arms and laid his cheek upon her, so grateful to get her back that no one could have laughed at him.

"She's been sleepin' in that old box, an' it floated off. I knew just what'd happened, though I didn't see it. She's all I've got. Sylvie, what'll I say to you? I'll fix up your boat good, don't you worry! I didn't see how I'd of got through the winter without Matie! Well, I'm greatly obligated, that's sure. 'Tis a catboat you sailed this time, sure enough! She's a wonderful nice cat, Mr. Bell. You can't appreciate how I feel to her; you've got Sylvie!"

"That's one reason why I do appreciate your feeling, old friend," said Mr. Bell gently. "I'm glad we came along in time to save her. You must come up to my house this winter, often. Sylvia will play and sing to you. We are going to share our warm happiness, and Sylvia is very fond of you, Gabriel."

"Well, in one way she'd oughter be. I ain't lamblike, but it's the same reason why the lamb loved Mary so, an' you know what that is! Good-bye. Awful thankful. Don't worry a mite over the boat; she'll be fixed up better'n ever this year."

Gabriel Gaby watched Sylvia and her father

away with a full heart, happy with Mate's tired little body nestled in his neck.

"Strange, isn't it, father?" said Sylvia after a long silence.

"That love, and kindness, and goodness mean so much to us all? I don't think so, my dear. I think there is nothing in my beloved science, in ambition, in fame, in glory, in anything, that weighs a feather in the balance against right thinking, true aims, real love. That's stretching our Gaby text somewhat, but that may serve as the starting point of our deduction," said Mr. Bell, laying his hand on his tall girl's shoulder as they walked.

"That sounds wise, father! I hope I'll keep that for my sailing chart," said Sylvia, covering the hand with her own, but not forgetting to pat the faithful comrade who had been hers in the old solitary days, as O'Malley jealously leaped up to remind her that he, too, was there and loved her.

"If you do, you'll be a woman that enriches the world, dear. Sailing by that chart will mean a happy Captain Sylvia," said her father.

And thus from the last sail of the season, Captain Sylvia and her father went contentedly homeward, homeward together.

**This book is under no circumstances to be
taken from the Building**

[illegible]

FORM 410

SEP 16 1948

